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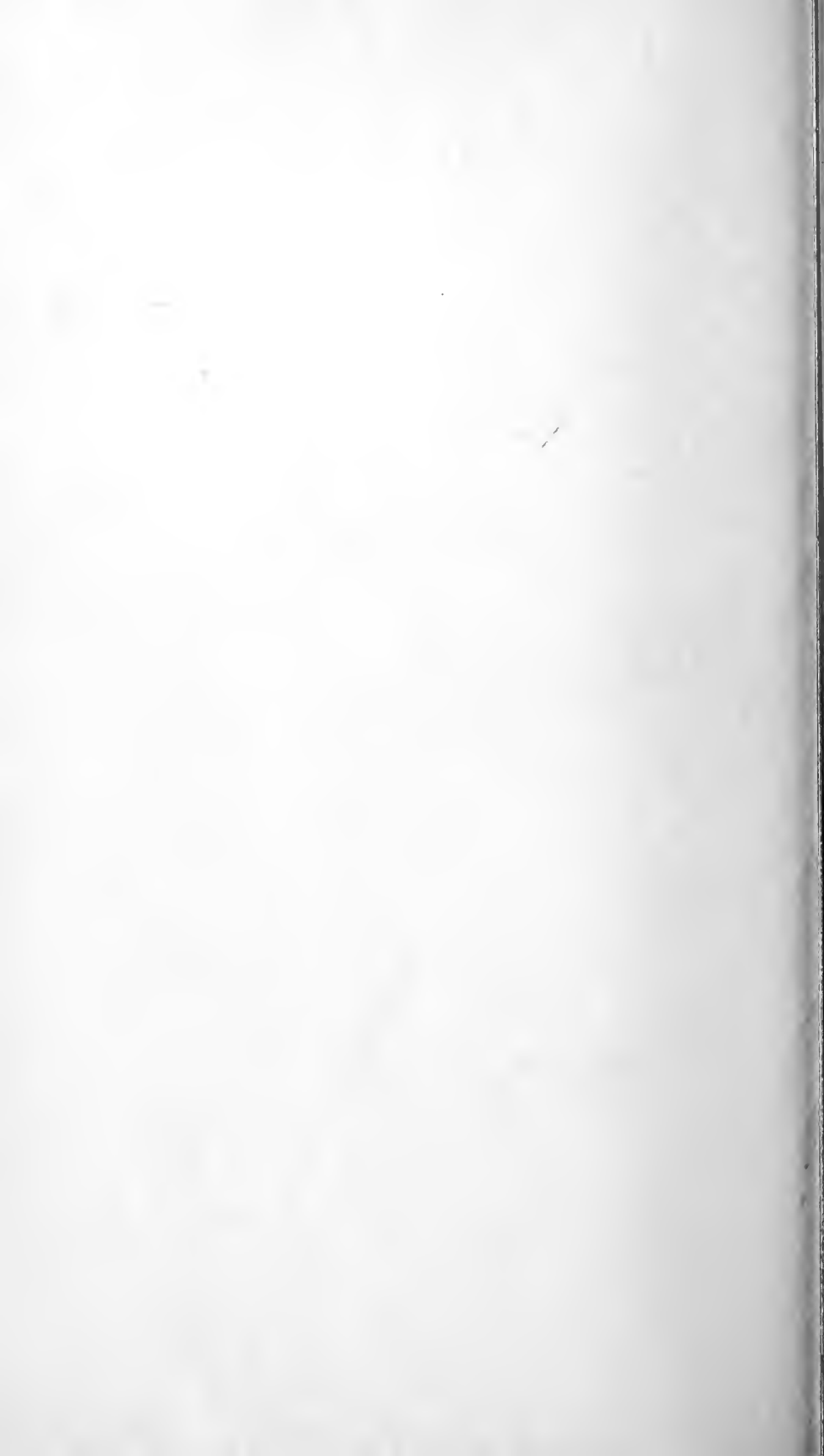
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SOCIAL LIFE IN GERMANY.

VOL. II.

In One Vol. 8vo.

PETER PAUL RUBENS,
HIS LIFE AND GENIUS.

Translated from the German of Dr. WAAGEN,
Professor of the Fine Arts, and Director of the Royal Gallery
at Berlin,
Author of "ARTS AND ARTISTS IN EUROPE."

By ROBERT R. NOEL, Esq.

Edited by MRS. JAMESON.

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SOCIAL LIFE IN GERMANY,

ILLUSTRATED

IN THE ACTED DRAMAS

OF HER ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE PRINCESS AMELIA OF SAXONY.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN, WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,
EXPLANATORY OF THE GERMAN LANGUAGE AND MANNERS.

BY MRS. JAMESON,

AUTHOR OF VISITS AND SKETCHES AT HOME AND ABROAD, CHARACTERISTICS
OF WOMEN, WINTER STUDIES AND SUMMER RAMBLES IN CANADA, &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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THE END OF THE WORLD

BY J. H. B. HARRIS

IN TWO VOLUMES

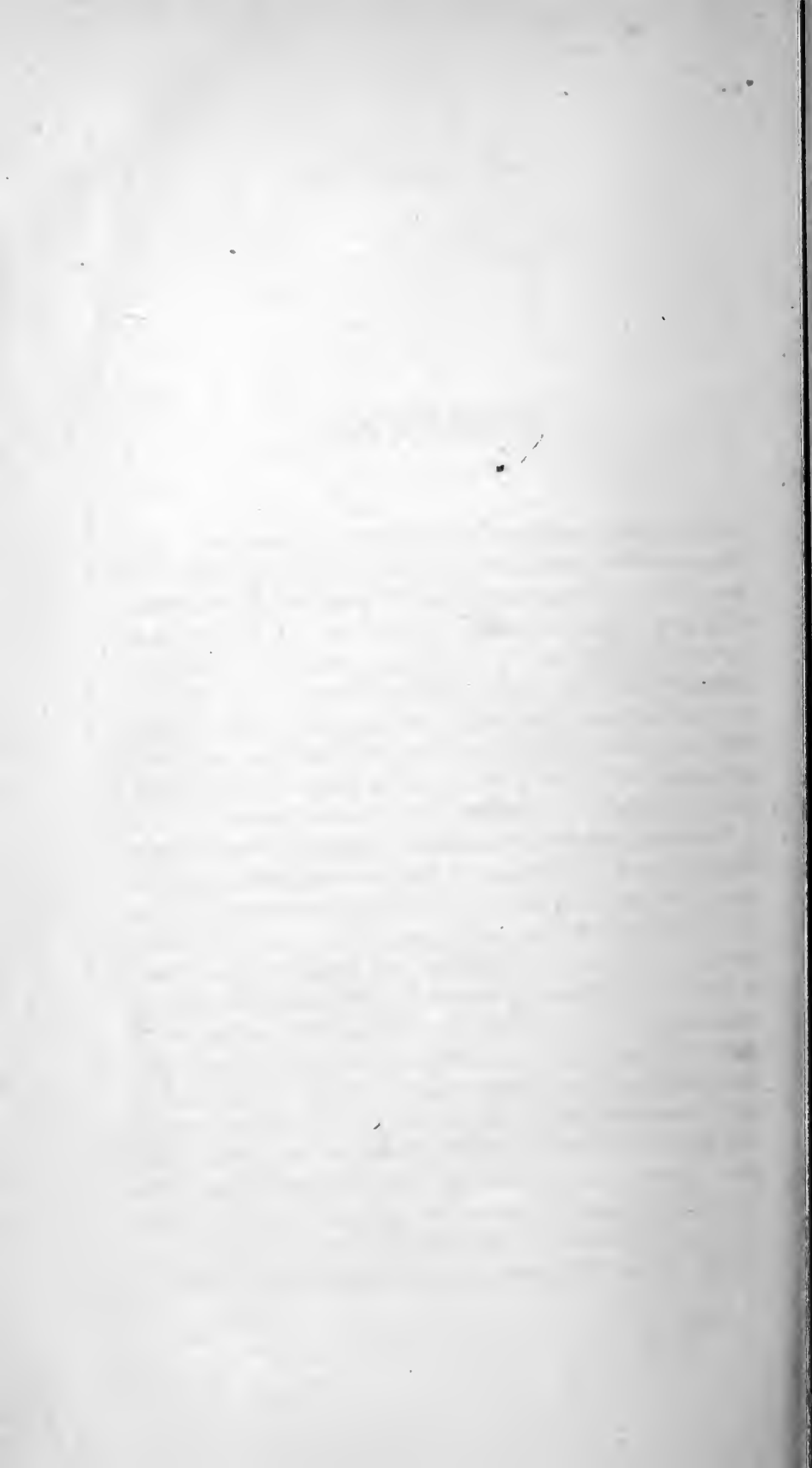
VOLUME I

THE YOUNG WARD.

(Der Zögling.)

A COMEDY.

IN FOUR ACTS.



REMARKS.

THIS charming comedy was produced for the first time at the Court Theatre at Weimar in the beginning of the year 1836: it has since been played on almost every stage in Germany, and everywhere with most deserved applause. I am afraid that my close translation will convey but a very inadequate idea of the consummate elegance of the style; but the truth and delicacy of the characters and sentiments can hardly fail to be appreciated; and every one who has resided in Germany will bear witness to the accuracy of the picture it exhibits of the manners and of the modes of thinking and feeling in the higher classes of German society.

It requires, however, a few words of explanation for the merely English reader. The heroine of the play, Countess Werdenbach, is anxious—but from no vulgar ambition—that her pupil, (or rather *protégé*,) Hallerfeld, should make what is called a brilliant *carrière*. We have not this word in the sense in which it is used in France and Germany, nor any equivalent for it—simply because we have not the *thing*. The younger sons and brothers of noble families form a numerous class in Germany, with very small fortunes, or no fortunes at all, who look to the government of the country for employment, civil or military; while the breaking up of the old order of things during the revolutionary wars threw open the highest civil and military appointments to the *Bürgerliche* class,—Napoleon's grand principle, "*la carrière ouverte aux talents*," having extended itself to Germany. Hence a considerable portion of German society is formed of the officials of

every grade under the government and the aspirants to office. In Austria this is more particularly the case ; in Vienna the number of the “ *Beamten*,” or paid officials, is in such monstrous disproportion to the community at large, that, as I once heard it humorously remarked, one half of the people are employed in keeping the other half in order.

Now the *carrière* of a young man in Germany is his progress through the different grades of the military or civil service ; he must begin by bringing a certificate of his general good conduct and acquirements, from the pastor of his parish, from the school in which he has been educated, and from the university :* these are indispensable, and they are not given lightly. I remember, for instance, when the grandsons of one of the greatest heroes of the late war,—of him who was regarded as one of the saviours of his country,—were twice sent back after the usual examination, and could not even obtain a lieutenancy, till a cabinet order (or decree) from the king himself absolved them from the qualifications required, and promoted them for the sake of the grandsire’s memory—a circumstance which rendered them not so much the objects of general congratulation as of general pity. Possessed of these credentials, he commences his *carrière*, properly so called, by waiting for the first vacant lieutenancy, if he be in the military line ; or, if in the civil service, by entering one of the public offices as clerk, (*without pay*,) where he works hard for three years at least, subsisting on his private resources. If during this probation he has given proof of capability and application, he is placed in the first salaried clerkship which may be vacant, and rises through the different grades of official rank till he become, if a diplomatist, *Legations-rath*, (councillor of legation ;) *Legations-secretaire* ; or *Gesandte accreditirt*, (accredited minister, or ambassador,) &c. If in the law, he may become *Land-richter*, (provincial judge ;) *President* (of a local court of law, or of a provincial

* In some parts of Germany the political opinions of the aspirant are also severely tested.

government;) *Regierungs-rath*, (town councillor;) *Geheim-rath*, (privy councillor;) *Geheim-ober-justiz-rath*, (supreme privy councillor of justice;) *Staats-rath*, (councillor of state;) and at last, *Staats-minister*, (minister of state,) &c. I give here but a few samples out of the countless number of official titles in Germany, some of which are of enormous length. In Prussia or Saxony, powerful interest may push forward a young man who has given proof of talent and application; but I never heard that any patronage could avail much in behalf of incapacity. These governments seem to be aware that it is their interest to be well served in every department. Every young man must work his way upwards, and literally *work hard*. The pay is small in comparison with the same official rank in England; the competition very great, there being always many hundred more aspirants than the government can possibly employ. There is also a law by which no young man can marry until he is promoted to a salaried office, (*angestellt*,) or can prove that his private fortune is adequate to the support of a wife and family.

Another point requiring some farther explanation is the ceremony of betrothing, (*Verlobung*,) previous to the solemnization of a marriage. It has been frequently alluded to in the former dramas, but as it forms a principal incident in the plot of the *YOUNG WARD*, I have reserved till now what I had to remark on the subject.

The "*Verlobung*," or betrothing, is often, but not always, a solemn ceremony. "*Sich verloben*" means, generally, that in answer to formal proposals the lover is formally accepted by the lady or her family; then, if there be no reason for keeping the affair a secret, the relations and intimate friends on both sides are assembled, and the young people are presented as "*verlobt*," (i.e. affianced). Sometimes an exchange of rings takes place in token of this engagement: I frequently met young ladies in company who wore the "*Verlobungs-ring*." The couple thus affianced are henceforth "*Braut and Brautigam*," (i. e. bride and bridegroom, which exactly answers to the French *fiancé, fiancée*); and visits

are paid in society with the two names printed on the same card—or it is announced to all whom it may concern in the public papers, and congratulatory visits are paid in return. If the parties are noble, they are presented together at court as “verlobte:” these ceremonies vary little in the different states of Germany.

The custom of betrothing has, like all human institutions, its advantages and disadvantages. As a considerable time must often elapse before the gentleman is in a position to marry, it is an advantage that the intimacy between the engaged parties should not be subject to misapprehension, and the lady’s reputation suffer from the gentleman’s assiduities: that she should not be exposed to the attentions of other men, nor they to the mistake of falling in love with her. It is also an advantage that this facility of intercourse enables persons to judge more truly of each other; to see more clearly what chance of happiness they may have in each other’s society before they are linked together by a more sacred tie; for it not unfrequently happens that this better knowledge of each other leads to the cancelling of the engagement ere it be too late. On the other hand, when this intercourse lasts too long, it sometimes has evil consequences; not only in the hope deferred that maketh the heart sick, but others more fatal still. Then, as the bridegroom is expected to devote every leisure moment to the society of his betrothed, as he attends her to all public places and to every party, (for it is not considered good manners to invite them separately;) as they are invariably seated next to each other, they have time to become tolerably tired of each other’s society before marriage, and have nothing left to say. As little restraint is placed on their intercourse, and as it is the gentleman’s duty to be very much in love, he is sometimes reduced to the dilemma so humorously stated by Rosalind, “gravelled for lack of matter”—*etcetera—etcetera*. In fact, the display of tenderness is such now and then, even in a room full of people, as to make the rest of the company look rather foolish and feel themselves rather *de trop*. Perpetual and devoted attention on the gentleman’s part, during this interval, be it longer or shorter, is a thing of

course, not to be dispensed with ; hence it will sometimes happen that the poor *fiancé* is glad to be relieved at last from this display of *tenderness obligato* by the rites of marriage. A neglect of all little graceful attentions immediately ensues, to the utter consternation of the poor wife, who is apt to mistake for a change of feeling what is only a change of manner.

Notwithstanding these remarks, I should say, that considering the peculiar constitution of German society, the advantages of the custom far exceed its disadvantages. It appears to me that a familiar and confidential intercourse, when not too long protracted, increases the chance of eventual happiness to both parties, and is, on the whole, particularly favourable to the woman.

The character of the Countess in this play is very exquisitely drawn and very highly finished. The tranquil grace, the suavity yet decision of manner, the tenderness and elevation of sentiment, in this most beautiful delineation of the high-born and high-bred German lady, require the powers of a first-rate actress. I have seen it admirably performed by Mademoiselle Lindner of Frankfort. The scene in which the Countess, incredulous of her conquest over the heart of a man so much younger than herself, steps up to her mirror, gazes for a moment on her own beautiful face, then turns away with a half conscious smile—gratified vanity and the feelings of the woman contending, but only for one instant, with reason and modesty—was one of the prettiest and most delicate, as well as most *effective* points I ever saw on the stage. Mademoiselle Hagen at Berlin, Mademoiselle Bauer at Dresden, Mademoiselle Müller at Vienna, and the charming Lortzing at Weimar, have all lent additional celebrity to this character by their finished impersonation of it. We are woefully deficient in ladies and gentlemen, or rather in the representatives of such, on the English stage: I know not one actress, except it be Ellen Tree, to whom such a part as the Countess Werdenbach could be trusted. The approved heroines of our comic drama are romps in comparison: but the whole play is perhaps too essentially German

in character and costume, to be relished or comprehended by an English audience—at least in its present form.

Ida, being noble, is *Fräulein*, which, for the reasons already given, I translate by *Lady* Ida. Hallerfeld is an admirable picture of a passionate, romantic boy: of the characters of Grünau and old Salome it is not necessary to speak;—they speak for themselves.

The scene we may imagine somewhere in the environs of Dresden—at one of those beautiful villas or Weinbergs (such as Weistrop, for instance,) scattered along the banks of the Elbe. It is clear from the allusions throughout the play, that this locality was in the fancy, probably before the eyes, of the authoress when she wrote. Pillnitz, the country palace of the Saxon royal family, and a favourite summer residence of the Princess Amelia, is thus situated.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

COUNTESS EMILIE VON WERDENBECH, *A widow.*

IDA VON GRÜNAU, *Her niece.*

BARON VON GRÜNAU, *Brother-in-law to the
Countess.*

BARON ROBERT VON HALLERFELD.

COUNT VON BIBERECK.

SALOME, *Ida's nurse.*

LADIES, GENTLEMEN, PEASANTS.

The scene during the two first acts is at a country-house belonging to the Countess ; during the two last acts in the same place, but two years later.

THE YOUNG WARD.

ACT I.

SCENE—*A drawing-room—with a piano on one side, a Psyche mirror and work-table on the other.*

IDA—SALOME.*

SALOME.

As I have been telling you, my dear young

* Throughout the play Ida addresses her nurse with the tender and familiar *Du*; while Salome uses towards her charge, young as she is, the respectful third person plural, *Sie*. It is quite impossible to give in English all the nice shades of sentiment expressed in German by the distinction in the use of pronouns.

lady, we shall see a wonderful change here before the year's out—a wonderful change!

IDA.

I do not understand you.

SALOME.

Don't you remember last St. Andrew's Eve, when we two and little Malchen* Bohring threw our shoes behind us? my shoe fell with the heel to the door, and so did Malchen's, as was very natural, seeing that she is twelve years old, and I sixty—both of us of an age at which one does not usually think of marrying; but your shoe flew off nimbly, just with the toe to the door-step, as who should say, "Make way! let me out!"

IDA.

Salome, pray leave off!—my aunt has forbidden me for the future to play such foolish tricks. She calls it all superstition and nonsense.

SALOME.

Marry! your lady aunt is a learned lady, who despises everything which she doesn't understand as well as her multiplication table. O, I'm sure I wouldn't take upon me to dispute with your aunt: she knows everything best—to be sure!

* Malchen is the German diminutive of Amalie (*i. e.* Amelia).

IDA.

She is all that is excellent, and means everything for my good : of that I feel sure.

SALOME.

Ay, best you should think so, since, alack-a-day ! you are under her protection.

IDA.

And am content to be so.

SALOME.

So am not I ; and I can't forgive it to your papa—God rest his soul !—that he should have placed you under the orders of this fine lady aunt : and what for ? why, to finish your education, forsooth ! as if you were not educated already !

IDA.

O, I know too well my own deficiencies !

SALOME.

And for all the world what are they ? can't you read, and write, and cipher ? can't you knit and sew ? and can't you play on the piano ? and can't you speak French ?*

IDA.

Ah, Salome, one must know a great deal more.

* It is perhaps lucky, both for Germany and England, that Salome's idea of a perfect education is not quite so universal as formerly.

SALOME.

What should you know more? The young Countess Marburg did not know half so much when Count von Thurnfeld married her.

IDA.

She is not happy; and my aunt thinks the reason is, that she married too young.

SALOME.

Ay, ay,—

“Early wooed, and early won,
Was never repented under the sun ;”

but I know—I know why my lady aunt talks so ;
—well, sure, I mean no disrespect !

IDA.

Nor will I suffer it.

SALOME.

Be content—I am blind, deaf, and dumb ;—and indeed, since I have been in this house, I have almost forgotten the use of my own faculties : but there is your uncle—he won’t let himself be reasoned out of his senses ; he will stand up for your rights in spite of yourself.

IDA.

My uncle !

SALOME.

A respectable old gentleman !—and if the dear

deceased had left *him* your guardian, things had gone on better than they do now.

IDA.

Yet my uncle has not half the understanding of my aunt.

SALOME.

Understanding! and pray where's the use of understanding? the world would have gone to destruction long ago, if, luckily, there were not some people in it who have no understanding to boast of.

IDA.

That's a strange fancy.

SALOME.

Not so strange as it sounds. You will soon be sixteen, and a most charming young lady you are: now a person without understanding would introduce you into company.

IDA (*sighing*).

I should like that very well, now and then.

SALOME.

And if a charming young gentleman—a pretty young gentleman—should come a visiting—not without some thoughts in his head, I warrant me—why, perhaps, a person without understanding might think of marrying you to him!

IDA (*frightened*).

Marrying me?—Salome!

SALOME.

Well, and what then—you like this young Hallerfeld, I fancy?

IDA.

Why, yes, he is so very good-natured!

SALOME.

And he likes you.

IDA.

He is always so kind to me—as if—as if he were my own brother.

SALOME.

Brother indeed! brothers are very agreeable as long as one plays at shuttlecock and blind-man's buff; but at sixteen a young lady doesn't want a brother, but a sweetheart, that *miss* may become *my lady* in no time.* O how I will dance at your wedding! I shall go and live with *you* then—shall I not?

IDA.

So you shall, dear Salome!

SALOME.

Do you know that Hallerfeld has the bunch of violets you gave him yesterday, in the garden, stuck in his waistcoat button-hole this morning?

IDA.

Indeed!

* Damit man das Fräulein bald gnädige Frau heißen könne!

SALOME.

And every day he visits the flowers that you have watched through the winter for your aunt ; and he waters them with his own hand.

IDA.

Ah ! they are not worth it !

SALOME.

And the linnet's nest which Gottlob* brought you two days ago ; it was he who climbed for it, at the risk of his life ;—ay, he ! Gottlob would never have ventured so high.

IDA.

If I had thought that, I would never, never have longed for that luckless nest !

SALOME.

Well, and do you make nothing out of that ?

IDA.

If ever he were to be unhappy—for my sake !

SALOME.

Ay—now's your time ; enjoy it ! Twenty years hence nobody will make themselves miserable about you !

IDA.

How do you mean ?

* Gottlob, and Gottlieb, (*Praise-God*, and *Love-God*,) are not uncommon baptismal names in Germany.

SALOME.

For no one will fall in love with you *then*, you know!

IDA (*frightened*).

In love—how can you, Salome, talk so!

SALOME.

I say in love—young Hallerfeld is in love with you; and that's why he hangs his head, and walks up and down the garden, and clambers up trees.

IDA.

I ought not to listen to you when you speak of such things.

SALOME.

Why not? the young gentleman is of your own rank—has a good fortune—is of age: so you may love him in all honour, and they who say the contrary, say wrong—and have their own views in it.

IDA.

What views?

SALOME.

O, all is not gold that glitters! Envy—envy, my dear young lady, is a vice that can hide itself under the mask of all manner of virtues; and of all things I do mortally hate your widows! they have, after their husbands' death, as it were, a

second youth, and usurp the rights of the next generation.

Enter HALLERFELD.

HALLERFELD.

Good morning, Lady Ida; may I inquire where your aunt is?

IDA.

She is writing; but I think she will be here immediately, for she has not yet breakfasted.

HALLERFELD.

With your permission, I will wait for her here.

IDA.

Surely it will be for me an honour—a pleasure.

SALOME.

I had clean forgotten the breakfast. I must go see if the rolls have come from town yet.

IDA (*in a low voice*).

Salome, do not leave me alone.

SALOME.

Don't be so bashful, but entertain your guest.

[*Exit.*

HALLERFELD.

Pray do not disturb yourself on my account; just do as if I were not here.

IDA (*goes slowly to her embroidery frame, and seats herself*).

Will you not take a chair?

HALLERFELD, (*he seats himself on the opposite side, and sighs deeply*).

Heigh-ho!

IDA.

You sigh?

HALLERFELD.

Does that never happen to you?

IDA.

Perhaps it does—sometimes.

HALLERFELD.

When your master has made the lesson too long? (*Pause. Ida remains silent.*) Or when the dressmaker has not brought home your new gown when promised—eh?

IDA.

I am no longer a child, Baron von Hallerfeld!

HALLERFELD.

No? I should be sorry for you if that were true. Only as children are we happy! Has Gottlob brought you the linnet's nest for which you wished so much?

IDA.

Yes, he has—and there are four young ones in

it; one of them is a little drooping, but I hope to bring him up with the rest.

HALLERFELD.

That's well.

IDA.

And I know to whom alone I am indebted for the pleasure it has given me!

HALLERFELD.

Indeed!

IDA.

You risked your life for me!

HALLERFELD.

Not at all; one who has been five years practising gymnastics, can climb a tree without risk of his life.

IDA.

You would detract from your own merit.

HALLERFELD.

O no indeed!—for I would have brought it from the top of the steeple, if I had thought its possession could make you happy.

IDA.

You are really too good.

HALLERFELD.

There is but one period in our life when happiness can be brought from a tree-top, or purchased with a dollar, and therefore woe to those who refuse anything to that happy age!

IDA.

You say that in such a solemn tone !

HALLERFELD (*sighing*).

Never mind my solemn tone.

IDA.

You look sad too.

HALLERFELD.

My days of mirth are long past.

IDA.

Soh ? I did not know—pray pardon me—that any misfortune had befallen you ?

HALLERFELD.

Be glad then—that you know it not.

IDA.

You are not ill ?

HALLERFELD.

I am quite well ;—you are acquainted, it seems, with no other suffering but sickness.

IDA.

I lost my father only a year ago. O, I often weep even now when I think of him !

HALLERFELD.

My parents died so young that, I may say, I have never known them.

IDA.

That is very sad !

HALLERFELD.

And now who is there to love me ?

IDA.

O, if that were all, I know some one who loves you dearly.

HALLERFELD (*eagerly*).

Indeed—and that is——

IDA.

My uncle Grünau.

HALLERFELD.

He?—O!—

IDA.

And if you liked, he would be to you a father.

HALLERFELD (*dryly*).

Exceedingly obliged; but without a father I shall endeavour to manage my own affairs.

IDA (*aside*).

Poor young man!—how sorry I am for him! Ah, if I were but a little older, perhaps he would tell me why he grieves—and I might comfort him, or at least weep with him:—weep! yes, there are moments when even to weep is not unpleasing.

[*She leans over her frame and goes on working, while Hallerfeld sits on the opposite side, turning over books and newspapers.*

Enter BARON VON GRÜNAU.

GRÜNAU.

I find you at last, my dear niece!

IDA (*springing up*).

O my dear uncle! this is delightful!—we did not expect you till to-morrow.

GRÜNAU.

Why, I finished all my business yesterday evening; saw the sun shining gloriously in at my window this morning; and, thinks I, why should I put off till to-morrow a pleasure I can have to-day?—so the horses were ordered, and here I am.

HALLERFELD.

Herr von Grünau! most happy to see you.

GRÜNAU (*smiling*).

You here—ha, ha! charming! I find my niece in excellent company; very right—very proper—sorry to have disturbed you.

HALLERFELD.

If you will allow me, I will announce your arrival to the Countess.

GRÜNAU.

Been with her—spoken to her already: I am now Ida's and yours—don't you know that it is a month since we saw each other—eh?

HALLERFELD.

Very true.

GRÜNAU.

You are looking quite well and gay.

HALLERFELD.

That is more than I knew.

GRÜNAU.

You like being in the country, here—eh?

HALLERFELD (*with emphasis*).

I would it could last for ever!

GRÜNAU.

Why, no one is going to drive you away. The countess has hitherto shown you all kindness—and Ida—(*looking at her*)—why, girl, what has come to you? you are half a head taller than you were a month ago! and your countenance has an expression and intelligence I never remarked before! (*to Hallerfeld*) Don't you think so?

HALLERFELD (*absently*).

O yes—certainly.

GRÜNAU (*to Ida*).

I have not yet thanked you for the present you sent me on my birthday; the most beautiful purse—I have it always in my pocket—(*takes it out and shows it to Hallerfeld*)—there—see how beautifully she works!

HALLERFELD (*politely*).

Beautifully indeed.

GRÜNAU.

And then she speaks such French! and—have you heard her sing?

IDA (*bashfully*).

Uncle!

HALLERFELD.

I have not yet had that pleasure.

GRÜNAU.

O you *must* hear her sing—and here's the piano——

IDA (*aside to him*).

My dear uncle! pray—I cannot—indeed I cannot——

GRÜNAU.

You will not make affected excuses only among ourselves?

HALLERFELD.

The young lady is really agitated—do not mind it.

IDA.

And I really am a little hoarse.

HALLERFELD.

She *is* hoarse.

GRÜNAU.

Hoarse! why just now she spoke very distinctly: I'll have no excuses. An old uncle is not to be put off like a young lover. (*Opens the piano.*) Ida! sit down. (*She hesitates.*) Sit down, I say, or I shall be angry.

[*Ida, frightened, sits down hurriedly before the piano.*

GRÜNAU (*turns over the music and takes up a piece*).

“ *Freudvoll und leidvoll, Gedankenvoll seyn,*” out of Egmont.* (*To Hallerfeld.*) You know it?

HALLERFELD.

A charming song!

GRÜNAU.

Is it not? I made her sing it to me every day in town, till I was, as it were, quite melted—dissolved. (*To Ida.*) Now collect yourself;—and you—(*to Hallerfeld*)—attend.

[*Ida sings, at first with a trembling voice, but gaining courage as she proceeds.*

GRÜNAU (*interrupting her from time to time.*)

Bravo! delicious!† bravissimo!

[*Hallerfeld stands lost in thought, and then*

* This is the celebrated song of Clärchen in Egmont:

Freudvoll, und leidvoll
Gedankenvoll seyn;
Längen und bangen
In schwebender Pein;
Himmelhoch jauchzend, zum Tode betrübt;
Glücklich allein ist die Seele die liebt!

“To be joyful, to be sorrowful, to be thoughtful;—to long, to pine in doubtful misery;—exulting high as heaven,—mournful even to death,—happy alone is the soul that loves!”

This exquisite song has been set to music many times: but the elaborate composition of Beethoven, though very fine, strikes me as far less in character with the singer Clärchen, than the simple ballad air of Reichard, which is always sung on the stage by Ida.

† The uncle adds *Zum Rüffen!* which is untranslatable.

turns away with emotion, and tears in his eyes.

Enter the COUNTESS.

[She appears at the door, and stands there for a few moments unperceived by the others.

GRÜNAU *(after the song is ended).*

Bravo! bravissimo! *(Wipes his eyes.)* Now what do you say to that?

HALLERFELD *(startled).*

I?

GRÜNAU.

Yes—what do you say to that—eh?

HALLERFELD.

Pardon my abstraction, those heavenly words of Goethe——

GRÜNAU.

You are quite affected, I see; and hasn't my niece, now, a charming voice?

HALLERFELD.

Very charming indeed!

GRÜNAU.

Ay, and she sings Rossini's things, and goes as high as B.

HALLERFELD *(humming the song abstractedly).*

“Happy alone the soul that loves!”

(Sighing)—Ah! most true!

THE COUNTESS (*coming forward with a smile*).

Ha! I think we are all in the sentimental way here!

HALLERFELD.

Do I see you at last, my dear madam? I have already sought you in your flower-garden, but could not find you there: then I ventured to your ante-chamber, for I feared you were unwell, but they told me you were only occupied.

GRÜNAU.

Ida has just been singing for Baron von Hallerfeld the song out of Egmont.

COUNTESS.

I heard it.

GRÜNAU.

My young friend seems in love with the pathetic, so our little Malibran here shall give him Thekla's song out of Wallenstein and the Ritter Toggenberg,* in her best style.

COUNTESS (*smiling*).

That would be rather too much of a good

* The allusion is to the song in Schiller's tragedy of Wallenstein—

The cloud doth gather, the greenwood roar,

The damsel paceth along the shore, &c.

translated by Coleridge, by Charles Lamb, and others.

The Ritter Toggenberg (Roland the brave) is one of Schiller's most popular ballads; both have been set to music many times and with various success.

thing. Robert, here is a note for you from Baron Weiler—he is hunting here in the neighbourhood—an invitation probably——

HALLERFELD.

Which I shall decline.

COUNTESS.

And why decline it? You had once a passion for hunting.

HALLERFELD.

I had—but hunting, like everything else in the world, has ceased to interest me.

COUNTESS.

That is not well in a young man of your age.

HALLERFELD (*sighing*).

A little touch of hypochondria.

GRÜNAU.

Eh? my good young friend?—no hunting?—no company?—and the song out of Egmont?—there must be something in all that—eh?

HALLERFELD.

Nothing in the world.

COUNTESS.

How have you been employed this morning?

HALLERFELD.

Reading—writing—working hard; your ladyship has reason to be satisfied with me.

COUNTESS.

I am glad to hear it.*

HALLERFELD.

O, I am now very industrious, and will do all that depends on myself to become a practical man of business, though I am afraid I shall never quite succeed.

COUNTESS.

And why so?

HALLERFELD.

Because I want that energy without which no man can attain any high object.

COUNTESS.

Remember that to the young the whole world lies open before them.

HALLERFELD (*sighs*).

The world has no charms for me.

COUNTESS.

You will change your mind on that point—too soon, perhaps.

GRÜNAU.

Who knows—eh? perhaps we have a certain expedient to restore you; and if that be the case, speak out freely—you know we are your best friends.

COUNTESS (*during this last speech she turns away, and walks to the window.*)

A lovely day!

* *Set mir lieb.* This is just the Italian phrase "*avere a caro.*"

HALLERFELD (*follows her, anxious to change the conversation*).

Rather warm!

COUNTESS.

I think I should like to draw a little; will you bring me a bouquet from the garden? You understand how to arrange flowers picturesquely.

HALLERFELD.

Do you think so? I fly! and only regret at this moment that I am not a Persian.

COUNTESS.

And why?

HALLERFELD.

That I might make my bouquet as significant as I could wish.

GRÜNAU.

Ay!—perhaps now an honest German might read in your eyes what your flowers would fail to express?

HALLERFELD.

Perhaps so;—perhaps not.

[*Exit.*

GRÜNAU.

A very fine young man that—eh?

COUNTESS.

Yes, he improves——

GRÜNAU.

Who would not wish to keep him when they had him must be out of their senses;—now, Ida is he not charming?

IDA (*blushing*).

Very—agreeable.

GRÜNAU.

And good-natured—eh ?

IDA.

Surely.

GRÜNAU.

And amiable to boot? I could have kissed you for singing that song so divinely!—big tears were in his eyes.

IDA.

Did I not sing out of tune once or twice?

COUNTESS.

You did, my child: nor was Hallerfeld's emotion caused by your singing; and if your uncle will follow my advice, he will for the future spare you the embarrassment of making an exhibition of talents as yet imperfect. Go now into the drawing-room: I have a few words to say to your uncle.
[*Ida leaves the room.*]

GRÜNAU.

What are your commands?

COUNTESS.

I must beg of you, as friend and kinsman, not to disturb the tranquil purity of a still childish heart.

GRÜNAU.

Eh?—how?

COUNTESS.

Nor put such ideas into your niece's head as ought long to remain strangers to her mind.

GRÜNAU.

I do not understand your ladyship.

COUNTESS.

Then I must speak more plainly ; what do you mean with regard to Ida and this young Hallerfeld ?

GRÜNAU.

I mean that she shall marry him.

COUNTESS.

Marry him !

GRÜNAU.

Yes, marry him ; he is rich—an equal and excellent match for her. Do you intend to keep your niece in the house till a prince comes to pay his addresses to her—eh ?

COUNTESS.

Hallerfeld has paid no addresses.

GRÜNAU.

He will, as soon as you please.

COUNTESS.

I doubt it much.

GRÜNAU.

He has a great veneration for *you*.

COUNTESS.

He has a grateful disposition, and is, on the whole, an excellent youth, who, with good management, may become a distinguished man.

GRÜNAU.

Which management, as it seems, your ladyship has undertaken ?

COUNTESS.

I do my best to fulfil the last wishes of a man who once secured my happiness at the expense of his own.

GRÜNAU.

You mean his father, the late Baron ? he was formerly in love with you, was he not ?

COUNTESS.

He was : and my parents had promised my hand to him. It depended on himself to become my husband, for I *must* have obeyed ;—but he discovered that my heart belonged to my late dear Werdenbach, and, notwithstanding his passion for me, he not only resigned all pretensions to my hand, but succeeded in removing the obstacles which separated me from the man I loved—nay, never rested till he saw us united.

GRÜNAU.

I call that nobly done, faith !

COUNTESS.

He was a widower when he sought my hand

and did not afterwards marry. On his deathbed he sent for me, and commended to my care his son, then eight years old. "I leave this poor boy alone in the world," said he; "be to him a mother, a guardian angel, when I am no more;" and weeping, I promised him to watch with my best powers over the welfare of his son—and have, up to this moment, fulfilled my vow.

GRÜNAU (*with a half sneer*).

Even envy cannot deny that.

COUNTESS.

As soon as I returned to this country, after my husband's death, I inquired after Robert, and assumed the rights of an old friend. I found him as yet unspoiled, but wavering in his principles, surrounded by flatterers and light companions, and averse from every serious occupation. To fix his mind on what was really worthy—to win him from his false friends—to rouse him to active exertion, was then my first endeavour, and thank heaven! it was not all in vain; for the confidence he placed in me from the first moment rendered it easy for me to obtain some influence over him.

GRÜNAU.

And to secure this influence, the best thing you can do now is to make him your nephew.

COUNTESS.

That will not answer at all.

GRÜNAU.

Why not?

COUNTESS.

Ida is yet but a child.

GRÜNAU.

A child of sixteen.

COUNTESS.

Her early education was much neglected.

GRÜNAU.

A good husband will finish her education.

COUNTESS.

How *can* he,—who is scarcely more than a child himself? My dear Baron, let us not arbitrarily intermeddle with the fate of these young people. To unite them now at their age, with their present feelings, were to render them really unhappy: besides, Robert does not love Ida.

GRÜNAU.

I should rather presume that he does. Don't you observe how he wanders about like a lunatic? and the servants aver that he has been seen listening to the nightingales, and peeping into churchyards.

COUNTESS.

That he has been lately occupied by some romantic feeling — *that* I have observed; but, believe me, Ida is not the object who has excited this feeling.

GRÜNAU.

Who can it be else?

COUNTESS.

That I do not know, and it distresses me.

GRÜNAU.

Say what you will, I think as I did.

COUNTESS.

Then I am placed under the necessity of sending Ida at once from home.

GRÜNAU.

How!—madam!

COUNTESS.

I cannot have this dear good girl cheated of the innocent happiness of her young years; and therefore shall send her for a twelvemonth to Madame de Braun, with whom I have already had some conference on the subject.

GRÜNAU.

Send her to a boarding-school!

COUNTESS.

To an excellent school, in which Ida will have better opportunities of cultivating her natural talents than any she can find here in the country.

GRÜNAU (*vehemently*).

You will not do it—must not—I am the girl's uncle——

COUNTESS (*smiling*).

Even for that reason!—I cannot well shut the

door against the uncle who persists in turning his poor little niece's head ; but it would be allowable in a preceptress. Do not be angry, my good Baron, I mean no offence. I will send Salome to show you to your room. (*Aside as she goes out.*) Really folly often works more mischief in the world than wickedness itself!

[*Exit.*

GRÜNAU.

A strange woman ! I never could abide her ; but she has a way of dressing up nonsense in fine words till it almost sounds like sense. If I only knew what sets her so against this marriage with Hallerfeld !—there must be something behind it all which I don't yet see.

Enter SALOME.

SALOME.

Are you arrived at last, my Lord Baron ?

GRÜNAU.

Good morning, Mamsell Salome ; how is it with your sprained foot ?

SALOME.

All well—all forgotten—now that I see your lordship again—our papa—our comforter—our protector ! Ah, how I have longed for your arrival !

GRÜNAU.

How have you been going on, then, for the last month—eh?

SALOME.

Wretchedly! I have well-nigh fretted myself into a consumption!

GRÜNAU.

Ay, indeed!—how so?

SALOME.

To be regarded no more than the fifth wheel to a cart—that I could endure—but my poor young lady!

GRÜNAU.

My niece?

SALOME.

My lady here does so tyrannise over her!

GRÜNAU.

Ida?

SALOME.

Every morning we are dragged out of bed by seven o'clock.

GRÜNAU.

Why—as to that——

SALOME.

And then we must go out a walking. My young lady has already caught cold once with these fine morning walks; and then at dinner

they talk learned languages—English or Russian—I can never understand a word;* and in the evening one must read fine-flown books about dead kings and queens, and such like; and what's more, the poor dear darling can never do anything right in my lady aunt's opinion; her embroidery is old fashioned—and her playing on the music, that used to enchant all the country people at the old castle,—to be sure its just nothing at all: in short, it's all finding fault from morn to night, when I'm sure my lady ought to be too happy to have such a sweet creature in her family. *You*, my lord, would have known better how to value such a jewel: her deceased father should have confided his daughter to you.

GRÜNAU.

I should have had no objection: the girl's rich: I would have taken her home willingly.

SALOME.

The poor dear child bears everything with the patience of an angel, and never complains: but she frets inwardly, and has quite fallen away.

GRÜNAU.

I didn't remark that she had grown thin.

* It would be quite consistent with German manners that Salome, Ida's *Bonne*, should, in the country at least, dine at the same table with her young charge and the Countess-aunt.

SALOME.

You are her uncle: don't you think you could contrive to get us out of this house?

GRÜNAU.

That is likely to happen without my interference: the Countess means to send Ida to school.

SALOME.

To school?—such a tall young lady!

GRÜNAU.

For about a year.

SALOME.

See now—what wickedness! She does it for nothing but to break off this marriage with young Baron Hallerfeld.

GRÜNAU.

It almost seems so.

SALOME.

But, my lord, you must not suffer it!

GRÜNAU.

And what can I do? The Countess has on her side my brother's will, and the law besides.

SALOME.

Such laws haven't a bit of sense in them.

GRÜNAU.

If I only knew why the woman won't have the Baron von Hallerfeld for a nephew!—

SALOME.

That *I* can tell you.

GRÜNAU.

So !

SALOME.

But you won't betray me ?

GRÜNAU.

Not for the world.

SALOME.

Why, then—because she would rather have him for a husband herself !

GRÜNAU (*staring with the utmost astonishment*).

Mamsell—Salome !

SALOME.

Believe me, my lord, or believe me not—it lies in your choice ; but I will stick to it in life and death—so it is, and no otherwise.

GRÜNAU.

There you may be mistaken. I was talking before you came for an hour together with the Countess ; she explained to me the reasons of her interest about young Hallerfeld, and made a long story about it all.*

SALOME.

The only true reason is, that she's in love with the young man herself.

GRÜNAU.

If it be so, it's abominable !

* The idiom is, " Und eine recht lange Brûhe darüber gemacht."

SALOME.

Ay, trust an experienced person, one who can tell you a word or two of the tricks of them widows. I was once going to be married when I was young; I only waited the moment when my sweetheart* would propose, and then there comes a widow, and fishes him away from me!

GRÜNAU (*without attending to her*).

I will know the truth.

SALOME (*wiping her eyes*).

He was in the army.—

GRÜNAU.

Who?

SALOME.

My old love.

GRÜNAU.

Who is talking of your loves? They belong by this time to the province of history. Leave me alone, pray, for I think I hear Hallerfeld.

SALOME.

I'm gone. (*Going, returns*.) Ah, my lord, if you can only bring him to propose for my young lady, I'll dance with you at the wedding! [*Exit*.

GRÜNAU.

A tempting bribe, truly! (*Hallerfeld is heard behind the scenes, singing the song in Egmont*.) 'Tis

* Der Herzeibste. The German language is peculiarly rich in words which express the affectionate relations of social life.

he—and still in the clouds, it seems. If I could only get him so deep in his romance that he could not get out of it in a hurry.

Enter HALLERFELD.

HALLERFELD (*with a bouquet in his hand, and singing*).

“Happy alone the soul that loves!”

GRÜNAU.

Ay—there’s reason in that.

HALLERFELD (*starting as he observes him*).

In what?

GRÜNAU.

In what the song says.

HALLERFELD.

I cannot get that air out of my head.

GRÜNAU.

Nor the words more particularly—eh? Where are you going?

HALLERFELD.

To the Countess, to take her these flowers.

GRÜNAU.

Time enough for that—at present I want to talk to you.

HALLERFELD.

In what can I serve you?

GRÜNAU.

Serve *me*?—my good young friend, it is I who

would serve *you*. There, lay the flowers down—
(*Takes the bouquet from him.*) Do you know that
your melancholy and dejection go to my very
heart?

HALLERFELD.

My natural temperament.

GRÜNAU.

Pah!—at twenty, well looking, and with a
hundred thousand dollars of your own—nonsense
—don't talk to me of a melancholy temperament!

HALLERFELD.

Think of me what you will—(*going.*)

GRÜNAU.

Well, but stay: you are like quicksilver—(*hold-
ing him*); you have some secret sorrow now—eh?

HALLERFELD.

If it be secret, 'tis a sign that I wish to confide
it to nobody.

GRÜNAU.

You are in love!

HALLERFELD.

Baron von Grünau!

GRÜNAU.

Don't be angry—I'm here on purpose to help
you.

HALLERFELD.

Allow me to go.

GRÜNAU.

No—no—listen to me, and don't be childish. Why should you be ashamed of it? the person you love is free.

HALLERFELD.

And who told you I was in love?

GRÜNAU (*looking at him*).

Your face.

HALLERFELD.

And if I say my face lies?

GRÜNAU.

Excuse me, but in that case the falsehood would be yours; therefore, to talk reason, the person you love is free, and not far off. (*Robert is struck silent.*) Well, now, why should you blush?

HALLERFELD (*after a pause*).

Whatever you may suppose, sir, I hope at least you will have the delicacy to be silent.

GRÜNAU.

And how are we to bring matters to a happy termination, if no one is to open his mouth?

HALLERFELD.

Who talks of a happy termination?

GRÜNAU.

Why, *I* do.

HALLERFELD.

Not to be banished from her presence is all I dare aspire to!

GRÜNAU.

Banished!

HALLERFELD.

It might be so, if I dared to declare myself, and therefore have I vowed an eternal silence—therefore do I conjure you to guard for ever that secret which you have so incomprehensibly discovered.

GRÜNAU.

It is true, then, what I would not allow myself to believe?—you were afraid, eh?—jealousy, eh? O this jealousy is a vile thing!

HALLERFELD.

I do not comprehend a word.

GRÜNAU.

O Salome—Salome!

HALLERFELD.

What do you want with the old woman?

GRÜNAU.

She has seen it all—she is a deep one: but you shall not be cheated of your happiness, so make yourself easy. I will play the uncle's part here. I will move heaven and earth. [*Going.*

HALLERFELD (*holding him*).

Will you ruin me?

GRÜNAU.

Let me go. I will, if it be necessary, invoke the protection of the laws.

HALLERFELD.

Are you out of your senses?

GRÜNAU.

Let me go, I say; the consent of the Countess must and shall be gained.

HALLERFELD.

Consider what you are saying——

GRÜNAU.

No consideration necessary; we will try fair means first, but if that fail, *fiat justitia, et pereat mundus*! So farewell, my dear nephew.

HALLERFELD.

Nephew!

GRÜNAU.

My nephew, when you marry Ida.

HALLERFELD (*transfixed with amazement*).

Ida! O heavens!

GRÜNAU.

I will go to her, and prepare her for your proposal—is not that what you wish?

HALLERFELD.

I wish? I—I really know not, Baron, what I can say to you.

GRÜNAU.

Say nothing then.

[*Going.*

HALLERFELD (*detains him*).

Do not be in such a hurry.

GRÜNAU.

Young sir, I really have no time for long ceremonies, for to-morrow I return to town.

HALLERFELD.

Then am I forced, without any preparation, to tell you, that—you have entirely misunderstood me!

GRÜNAU.

How? what?

HALLERFELD.

And that it never entered into my head to be in love with your niece.

GRÜNAU.

Are you in jest?

HALLERFELD.

In most serious earnest.

GRÜNAU.

So much the worse.

HALLERFELD.

I thought it my duty to prevent you, by an honest explanation, from taking a step so disagreeable to all parties.

GRÜNAU.

Explanation! — Gentlemen think to make everything wrong, right, by *explaining*, as they call it: and pray, sir, if you do not love my niece, why have you been talking with her—laughing

with her—crying over songs, and climbing trees for birds' nests? Yes, sir, I am informed of all, and I demand satisfaction, Sir!

HALLERFELD.

You rave!

GRÜNAU (*without listening to him*).

And why did you tell me, yourself, just now, when I spoke of some secret grief, and of the object that here, even here—hard by—why there's no one except my niece—(*strikes his forehead, as if seized with a sudden thought*)—why, bless my soul! and you are alarmed, you are—stand still; don't go—now I see it all! O Salome, Salome!

HALLERFELD.

Salome again!

GRÜNAU.

No, I shall never recover it!—I'm a dead man!*

HALLERFELD.

Only say what is the matter?

GRÜNAU.

To be such a fool, young man, so stone blind, as to let yourself be caught by an old coquette! Isn't it enough to drive one distracted?

* Das fehlte mir noch! Das ist mein Letztes! is the peculiar German idiom.

HALLERFELD (*sternly*).

Who do you mean, sir, by an old coquette?

GRÜNAU.

Why, this Countess—who is not ashamed, at her age, to steal her niece's lovers away!

HALLERFELD.

No more, sir! your sixty years restrain my arm, or, assuredly, you should not unchastised dare to slander a woman worthy of the deepest veneration.

GRÜNAU (*sneeringly*).

And the tenderest love.

HALLERFELD (*passionately*).

And the tenderest love! Why not? I care not if I proclaim to the whole world a feeling which I have hitherto concealed from timidity—not from shame. I do love her—that noblest, most excellent of women! 'tis a love, at once my happiness and my pride! Let others be caught by the trifling of your mere girls; I am to be captivated only by that beauty which beams with all the lustre of approved virtue.

GRÜNAU (*scornfully*).

Well, go to her—you had better—and offer her marriage.

HALLERFELD.

I have not yet had the courage to betray my

feelings by a single word—but you are going the right way to give me this courage, and who knows to what rashness I may be tempted within the next hour!

GRÜNAU (*vehemently*).

Do what you like—I'm not your guardian, and have no power to hinder you; but speak I can and will; the whole world shall know what to think of you and of that old *intriguante*, to whom a deceived father entrusted the care of his child: yes, it shall!

HALLERFELD.

You presume too far on the forbearance due to your years—but do not try me beyond endurance: in me she has at least a kinsman, a pupil, a friend: and I swear that if you allow yourself to utter another offensive word against the Countess, I will assume my rights, and avenge insulted virtue, even with blood!

Enter the Countess.

COUNTESS.

Robert, what is all this? what are you about?

HALLERFELD.

Your pardon, madam! I know what is due to your roof and family—but did you know the cause——

COUNTESS.

Let it be what it may, I demand your respect for an old man—my guest and kinsman—I demand it, Robert!

HALLERFELD (*gazes at her for a moment in silence*).

Well, then, I will act like Carlos, when the queen stept between him and the Duke of Alva.*

[*Throws himself into Grünau's arms.*]

GRÜNAU.

Oh! oh! young gentleman, you tread on my corns!

[*Robert rushes out.*]

COUNTESS.

What is the meaning of all this?

GRÜNAU.

Madness, absolute madness! I take my leave.

[*He goes out limping.*]

COUNTESS (*looks after them in amazement;—a long pause.*)

Can it be possible? can it be really possible? I must ask my looking-glass—(*steps hastily to the mirror, and gazes at herself;*) is it possible? (*she turns away with a half-suppressed feminine self-complacency.*) Why—indeed——

The curtain falls.

* The allusion is to a famous scene in Schiller's tragedy of Don Carlos.

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE—*The same Apartment.**The Countess alone.*

COUNTESS.

No, I cannot doubt it—I have certainly made a conquest;—and when I think of Robert's romantic submission just now, and connect it with a thousand other indications—I am astonished that I did not sooner guess his secret. Yet, could I ever have dreamed of such a thing? The discovery is flattering, assuredly; but it is most inopportune and perplexing. I shall be obliged to withdraw myself entirely from this young man; and how will Grünau treat me, if, as I fear, he knows of this folly? Grünau, who can never

forgive me, that his brother left the guardianship of his daughter to me rather than to him: he will do what he can to render me ridiculous—perhaps misrepresent my character. I think I hear him coming—I am really in as much confusion as a girl of seventeen.

Enter GRÜNAU.

GRÜNAU (*in evident ill-humour*).

Madam, I am come to take my leave, else I should hardly have made my appearance here again, but politeness takes place of all things, in all circumstances.

COUNTESS.

Did you not think of staying with us till to-morrow?

GRÜNAU.

I did—but I've changed my mind; the air here doesn't agree with me. I've ordered the horses, and I shall be clear off in half an hour—ay, I shall—you may make yourself easy.

COUNTESS (*slightly embarrassed*).

Won't you take a seat, Baron?

GRÜNAU (*gruffly*).

I'd rather stand, by your leave; I've no intention of staying long—wouldn't for the world be in the way of a more welcome visiter.

COUNTESS.

I expect no one more welcome than yourself.

GRÜNAU.

Fair words, madam—but I'm sixty years old, and in these days we find it is only those just out of the nursery who are thought fit to rule states—and hearts.

COUNTESS.

Baron von Grünau, I do not understand you!

GRÜNAU.

O ay, ay—you are, as they say, a woman of sense—except in the case in question.

COUNTESS.

Do you mean to offend me?

GRÜNAU.

Not my intention—but, d'ye see, I think that when the heart's in the case, the cleverest people in the world make fools of themselves.

COUNTESS.

What do you talk of hearts?

GRÜNAU (*running on*).

Now the heart, you see, is like the main-spring of a watch—it is not visible, but it goes on, tick, tick, till it has brought twelve at night to three in the morning:—pray, when may I wish you joy?

COUNTESS.

Of what ?

GRÜNAU.

The Baron von Hallerfeld has, I suppose, declared himself?

COUNTESS.

Declared himself?

GRÜNAU.

As your ladyship's suitor, I mean.

COUNTESS (*in confusion*).

You are too absurd—the young man—what do you suppose?—how can you believe?—

GRÜNAU.

I only believe what he told me himself.

COUNTESS.

He told you? Can he have so far forgotten himself?

GRÜNAU.

He intended to propose this very day.

COUNTESS.

O, my dear Baron, prevent it—I entreat—

GRÜNAU.

How should I prevent it? he is gone distracted; you saw yourself that we had nearly come to cut and thrust.

COUNTESS.

What *can* you have said to him?

GRÜNAU.

Nothing but the plain truth—but he wouldn't listen, and thinks himself sure of you, I can tell you.

COUNTESS.

Impossible!

GRÜNAU.

His own words.

COUNTESS (*walking about in anger*).

That were abominable.

GRÜNAU.

Ay, you see, such are the young coxcombs now-a-days; give them the little finger, they grasp the whole hand.*

COUNTESS.

My good will for him was so pure—I endeavoured to attract him from such honourable motives!

GRÜNAU.

It's a great pity that on this point no one will ever believe you.

COUNTESS (*with dignity*).

O, there are many who know my character too well—and, in the worst case, I have my own conscience to acquit me.

GRÜNAU.

Well, I will defend you as well as I can—for,

* A German proverb.

to judge from your honest indignation, I have done you some wrong.

COUNTESS.

Do you acknowledge so much?

GRÜNAU.

For it's true—is it not—that the young man is a fool? You have no idea of marrying him, have you?

COUNTESS.

How can you suppose such a thing?

GRÜNAU.

Yet, what will you do if he urges you? if he has the courage to make formal proposals?

COUNTESS.

Do! what duty and reason command me to do: but now to another subject—for I have a request to make to you, Baron.

GRÜNAU.

Pray command me.

COUNTESS.

You set off, you tell me, this very day—will you take Ida with you to town?

GRÜNAU.

Ida—and wherefore?

COUNTESS.

We may have scenes occurring in the house, which it would do her no good to witness. Take her to Madame de Braun—who is already prepared for the arrangement.

GRÜNAU.

What, have you still this nonsensical fancy about a boarding-school?

COUNTESS.

I shall in no case alter this part of my plan.

GRÜNAU.

Which doesn't please me at all—and you know it.

COUNTESS.

I do, and I am sorry for it.

GRÜNAU.

And yet you require that I should myself—

COUNTESS (*with decision*).

I depend on your obliging me.

GRÜNAU.

Well then—I have a place in the carriage.
(*Aside.*) If I take her myself to school, it will, at least, look as if the uncle had some authority.
(*Aloud.*) What were you saying?

COUNTESS (*who has been standing as lost in thought*).

I?—nothing.

GRÜNAU.

Here comes your Celadon.

COUNTESS.

Pray remain silent, and let me speak.

Enter HALLERFELD.

HALLERFELD (*entering in some confusion.*)

Your pardon, Countess!—ah, *you* here, sir?

GRÜNAU.

Well, are you quieter than you were?

HALLERFELD (*haughtily*).

I have promised the Countess to keep terms with you: I hope you will not tempt me to break my promise.

COUNTESS.

No more—no more of these ill tempers. (*To Robert.*) Have you had any letters from town?

HALLERFELD.

None.

COUNTESS.

I have.

[*Significantly.*]

GRÜNAU.

So? any particular news?

COUNTESS.

A good deal of news—but only one thing that I remember particularly, as being really extraordinary: it is said that the Generalin* Kirst is to marry young Reinsberg—I cannot believe it.

HALLERFELD.

Why not?

* In Germany the wife takes the title of her husband with the feminine termination; thus in conversation and in letters a lady may be addressed as *Frau Geheimrätin*, Mrs. Privy Councillor; *Frau Kanzlerin*, Mrs. Chancellor; *Frau Ober-Forstmeisterin*, Mrs. Commissioner of Woods and Forests; and so on. Generalin is the wife of a General.

COUNTESS (*impressively*).

What! a woman of a certain age—the widow of a distinguished man—choose for his successor a mere youth, who as yet has done nothing?—nay, as yet scarce knows what he *can* do?—excuse me, but such a proceeding were as reprehensible as ridiculous. I think I am called—with your leave!

[*She curtsies, and goes out. Robert stands overwhelmed.*]

GRÜNAU.

That struck home!

HALLERFELD.

What?

GRÜNAU.

That, about the marriage.

HALLERFELD.

The Countess knows of my love then—does she?

GRÜNAU.

She knows all.

HALLERFELD.

And through your indiscretion?

GRÜNAU.

Not so—but through your nonsense about Don Carlos; and what she thinks of it all, you have just heard.

HALLERFELD.

Then am I undone; and the happiness of my

whole life destroyed ! O why did you give words to that which I had scarce allowed myself to think ? why tempt me to venture on a step which can never, never be recalled ? You, you alone have poisoned my whole existence !

GRÜNAU.

Now must I be the scape-goat !

HALLERFELD.

O could I but be again—as I was yesterday !—then I was happy ; there was a joy even in my grief.

GRÜNAU.

That pleasure, I should suppose, you can easily have again.

HALLERFELD.

Ah, you do not understand me : when love has once betrayed itself, friendship is out of the question. The delightful terms I was on with the Countess before she knew the secret of my heart, can exist no longer now she does know it—she will never forgive me, that I have dared to lift my eyes to her ; and I—I feel I must at times remember with bitterness that she despised the devotion of my young heart. Offended pride on the one hand, wounded feeling on the other, will prevent, for the future, all confidence between us : I cannot live in this perpetual struggle between reserve on her part, shame on mine—and therefore will quit the house this very day.

GRÜNAU.

That, in fact, were the most sensible thing you could do.

HALLERFELD.

What care I for fame or for promotion? Only to please her did I wish to advance myself: now I have lost this object, there is an end of my ambition. I will give up my *carrière*, abandon my studies, and dissipation and amusement shall be henceforth all I will think of. I am rich enough. London and Paris are open to me: I will throw myself into every folly, and, in the whirlpool of pleasure, try to forget, that my life's chief good is lost for ever!

GRÜNAU.

Only don't play the fool too far;—you will come back to us—won't you?

HALLERFELD.

Heaven only knows!—you will make my adieus to the Countess?

GRÜNAU.

With the greatest pleasure.

HALLERFELD.

Tell her I thank her for all kindness she has shown me.

GRÜNAU.

I shall so.

HALLERFELD.

And that I entreat her to pardon my ill temper to-day.

GRÜNAU.

I understand.

HALLERFELD.

That it is her sentence that has driven me forth into the wide world.

GRÜNAU.

Very well.

HALLERFELD (*struggling with his emotion*).

And that I only wish she may find another heart as capable of understanding her own.

GRÜNAU.

Ay, ay!

HALLERFELD.

Tell her that I take with me the ring she gave me——

GRÜNAU.

So!

HALLERFELD.

And that I will never part with it but with life!

GRÜNAU.

A-hem!

HALLERFELD.

And if I die in a foreign land——

GRÜNAU.

O enough, enough! I can remember no more.

HALLERFELD (*looking up to heaven*).

O it is hard—hard to bear! [*He rushes out.*]

GRÜNAU.

Ha, ha, ha! he's off—he's not gone in to see her again, however, and so far well:—I've looked her through—my lady Countess; she would have had him willingly, if it had not been for the fear of what the world would say: but I was at hand to tickle her up with pretty words and metaphorical speeches—till she forswore the whole thing, and can never give into it again. I'm not naturally ill-natured—but she has spoilt her niece's marriage, and now she sha'n't have him herself: no, justice must be done.

Enter IDA and SALOME, both weeping.

IDA.

Ah, dearest uncle—have I found you at last?

SALOME.

O, my good lord, help us!

GRÜNAU (*angrily*).

What the deuce is all this whimpering about?
Such a scene comes in the nick. •

IDA (*sobbing*).

Is it true that I am going away, uncle?

GRÜNAU.

You are going to town with me.

SALOME (*sobbing*).

And that I'm to be left behind?

GRÜNAU.

The dickey is small, and there's my valet—so that I have only the led horse to offer you.

IDA.

O my dear uncle, why am I to go away?

GRÜNAU.

Why?—for reasons—your aunt will have it so, and I too—you are to go to school with Madame de Braun.

SALOME.

So! it's all really true—and without me?

GRÜNAU.

Your education is finished.

SALOME.

O my poor dear young lady! O the wickedness of people! to separate you from the only one who really cares for you—that you may have nobody to complain to when they do you wrong—Oh! oh!

GRÜNAU.

Why, she is not going among savages, is she?

SALOME.

Do you think my young lady can wait upon herself at school?

GRÜNAU.

I know nothing about that.

SALOME.

Who will curl her hair for her every night?

GRÜNAU.

Don't bother me!

SALOME.

And who will nurse her when she's sick?

GRÜNAU.

Sick—lord bless us all! why, Salome, you are doting.

SALOME.

There—I see you too are against me——

GRÜNAU.

This nonsense puts me out of patience. You are making a fool of the poor girl:—fie, Ida—take heart, girl! when you are beside me in the carriage I will have none of this hanging of the head.

IDA.

O, uncle! it is as if I left my heart and soul behind me here!

GRÜNAU.

They'll not stay behind, never fear; or, if they do, they will soon be after you. In any case, it was all over with you here, for when we go, Baron von Hallerfeld goes too.

IDA.

He too! and where is he going?

GRÜNAU.

To London or to Paris; how should I know? to amuse himself—to divert his mind: but what does it signify?—let him go where he will;—who cares not for me, I care not for him. There, don't cry, I'll get you another husband; a man of wax* — a handsome man — far handsomer than Hallerfeld—you shall see: so come along, take heart.—Well, if you will go on crying and sobbing, have it out now—(*takes out his watch*)—you've just half an hour for it. [*Exit.*]

IDA (*drying her eyes—after a pause.*)

So Hallerfeld is going away—far away: why is he going?

SALOME.

Because he *must*, poor young gentleman!—they've forced him to it.

IDA.

Has any one here offended him?

SALOME (*muttering*).

Intrigue—conspiracy—infernal arts—

IDA.

Pray, pray, dear Salome, speak out clearly.

SALOME.

Well, I don't see why I must keep my mouth

* Ein Herrchen zum mahlen.

shut—it's better you should learn to know the people you have to do with. Baron Hallerfeld wanted to marry *you*, and that didn't please some folks—and then—in short—your aunt wanted to marry him, and that didn't please *him*; and so there was nothing for him to do, you see, but to make off.

IDA.

My aunt!—what do you say?

SALOME.

Only ask your uncle if I fib—what have I always told you of my lady Countess? didn't I say so? you wouldn't believe me—and now you're forced to it.

IDA (*passionately*).

Salome—you will drive me mad!

SALOME.

Here comes my lady—don't make any remarks on what you have just heard, but stick fast to my going with you. If I can only be with you, it's all right.

Enter the COUNTESS.

COUNTESS.

I am come, my Ida, to wish you a good journey, and bid you farewell, but for a short time only; in a few days I return to town, and shall then see you daily.

IDA (*with some reserve*).

You are very kind.

COUNTESS.

You seem uneasy; the arrangement I have made for you has taken you by surprise—confess it?

IDA.

I cannot deny it.

COUNTESS.

But, believe me, my anxiety for your welfare has alone suggested it; and is it not better, after all, to get over an anticipated pain as quickly as possible? (*To Salome.*) Have you packed up your young lady's things yet?

SALOME (*sulkily*).

I didn't know there was so much haste.

COUNTESS.

The post-horses are already harnessed—put what is wanting immediately into a trunk: what is not ready to-day we will send after her.

SALOME (*muttering as she goes*).

She would fain have the poor girl out of the house—well——

[*Exit.*

COUNTESS (*to Ida who is weeping*).

Tears, my child? be reasonable—this is not a case for tears, Ida!

IDA (*sobbing*).

To be thrown among strangers—all alone——

COUNTESS.

You have both seen and spoken to Madame de Braun, and she is as excellent in mind as she is amiable in manners.

IDA.

And if I must comply with your wish to go to her house, you will at least permit me to take Salome with me.

COUNTESS (*gently but firmly*).

That *cannot* be.

IDA.

I should think, that, considering the sacrifice I make——

COUNTESS.

'Tis *I* who make the sacrifice in parting with you, Ida; for I shall miss your society sadly: besides, you are leaving my house for a year only, and your Salome—whose devotion to you merits all your gratitude—remains with me, consequently, in good hands. Does not this content you?

IDA (*coldly*).

I must be content—since here I have no choice.

COUNTESS.

I wish you could see, Ida, that in this plan I have only your good in view.

IDA.

As I obey, my opinion can be of little consequence.

COUNTESS (*looking at her steadily till Ida's eyes drop beneath her gaze*).

Ida! there is something in your mind which you do not speak out—something not native to your heart—not right, my Ida. (*Earnestly and tenderly.*) Do you mistrust me?

IDA.

Ah! I would not willingly—but——

COUNTESS.

Some one has been trying to prejudice you against me—is it not so?

IDA.

O do not speak of it!—as you stand before me, there—looking so—I cannot, cannot think ill of you!

COUNTESS.

So! they *have* been speaking ill of me? I do not ask *who*—but I do entreat you to tell me what has been said of me.

IDA.

I cannot bring my lips to utter it.

COUNTESS.

I must persist in my request.

IDA.

No, no—I am too much ashamed.

COUNTESS.

Speak, Ida, and give me this proof of your affection.

IDA.

Then I will try : they say—but I don't believe it indeed——

COUNTESS.

They say—what ?

IDA.

They say you have been opposed to my happiness—because—because——O do not let me speak *that* !

COUNTESS.

I opposed to your happiness ?

IDA.

Yes—and *that* is the reason that Hallerfeld is going away.

COUNTESS.

Hallerfeld going ? I knew not a word of it.

IDA.

Not know it ?

COUNTESS.

No : where is he going ?

IDA.

To London, my uncle says, or to Paris—to amuse himself—to try to forget——he is going this very day.

COUNTESS.

Is it possible? (*Aside*) this I cannot permit—it must be prevented.

IDA.

You are sorry—are you not?

COUNTESS (*walking aside*).

To abandon his studies, give up his *carrière*, and with his mind in this tumult of passion—without a friend—without an adviser, thus to throw himself into the whirlpool of society—he were lost—ruined!

IDA (*timidly*).

Perhaps you could persuade him to stay?

COUNTESS.

Perhaps ;—meantime, farewell, my Ida,—and whatever may happen, you will not doubt me again, will you?

IDA.

Ah—surely not!

COUNTESS.

Had any prospect of happiness offered itself, I had assuredly secured it for you ; but, trust me, that as yet, and for the present, there is nothing of the kind in view ; so, my love, put all such thoughts and wishes out of your mind as are hardly fitting at your age, and be again the joyous child you were a few weeks ago. (*Embracing*

her.) We shall see each other again on Sunday. (*Aside as she goes out.*) He must not go—even though I am forced to some desperate means to prevent it. [*Exit.*]

IDA.

I believe, after all, my aunt is in the right. I was happier than I am now, before Salome—and then my uncle——(*sighs.*) I believe it would be well if I *could* be a child again—but it will be hard;—my lessons seem more tiresome than ever, and all my plays foolish. If I am too young to take my place in the world, why, why have they made my mind older than it ought to be? (*She steps to the window.*) There is my uncle's carriage, and the horses already harnessed; in a few minutes I must be gone—and still, still I feel as if I *could* not go.—(*She takes a diamond ring from her finger.*)—I will leave a little memorial behind me of this hour—a little remembrance, that will exist for myself alone, which no one will ever see, and which I shall find when I come back. (*She writes with her ring on the window-pane.*) There it is—"Farewell, Robert!"—no one can see it, who does not look for it, and what will be my own thoughts when I see it again! shall I not laugh at it?—O no, hardly!

[*Hallerfeld enters, looking round the room as if he sought some one. Ida, who has been gaz-*

ing on the window, turns round with a start.

Ah, is it you, Baron Hallerfeld?

HALLERFELD.

Your aunt has sent for me; is she at home?

IDA.

She has just gone to her cabinet.

HALLERFELD (*smiling*).

Has any great misfortune happened, that you speak in that melancholy tone?

IDA.

Don't you know I'm going away?

HALLERFELD (*with indifference*).

No, indeed; I have heard nothing of it.

IDA.

For a whole year!

HALLERFELD.

And where, then, are you going?

IDA.

To town.

HALLERFELD (*smiling*).

Oh, not so far as the north pole then?

IDA.

Don't laugh at it; short as the distance may be, it is not less a separation from all my friends: I am going to Madame de Braun.

HALLERFELD.

A famous school, as I have heard.

IDA.

But I will take my linnets with me.

HALLERFELD.

Right—you will do well——

IDA.

And the plants that you have so often watered.

HALLERFELD.

I'm glad of it—you will take good care of them.

IDA.

Yes, I will.

[*She bursts into tears.*]

HALLERFELD.

Nay, nay, why should you cry?—you must not do that.

IDA (*sobbing*).

I can't—help it!

HALLERFELD.

I dare say you will find yourself much better off at school than here; you will improve in knowledge, and you will have charming young ladies as friends and companions—so don't cry!

IDA (*with suppressed vexation*).

And at least shall be missed by no one here.

HALLERFELD.

And then your aunt will be in town in the autumn, and will go and see you.

IDA (*bitterly*).

And my uncle too!

HALLERFELD.

And so you will have all you love near you.

IDA.

I hope so. (*Aside*). Ah, my aunt spoke truly!
(*After a moment's struggle she speaks firmly and quickly.*) Good-bye, Baron von Hallerfeld!

[*Curtsies and exit.*]

HALLERFELD (*after a pause*).

She requested to speak to me. What can she have to say? Does she repent to have wounded with scorn so young and so true a heart? or does she wish to renew an intercourse which I feel I could no longer endure? I know not; but I know that the next quarter of an hour must be, in any case, fraught with pain. I have hardly courage to knock at the door—that door which I have so often opened with a lightsome heart! and yet I must—I must!

[*After some hesitation, he knocks at the door.*]

Enter the COUNTESS from her room.

COUNTESS.

Are you there, my dear cousin? * I have been waiting for you impatiently, and I hope you do not take ill the apparent incivility with which I left you standing with uncle Grünau just now?

* Better signifies kinsman or relation in a general sense.

—among good friends there should be no such misunderstandings.

HALLERFELD (*embarrassed by her easy tone*).

Madam, I——

COUNTESS.

If I *have* offended you, I offer my hand in token of peace.

[*Holds out her hand, which he kisses and then drops.*]

HALLERFELD (*after a pause of embarrassment*.)

Was that all you wished to say to me?

COUNTESS.

O no! I have many other things upon my mind. Hallerfeld, is it true that you are about to leave us?

HALLERFELD (*looking down*).

Yes.

COUNTESS.

And this very day?

HALLERFELD.

I thought it best.

COUNTESS.

Why do you wish to travel?

HALLERFELD.

I wish to see the world.

COUNTESS.

But this project of travelling will interrupt your *carrière*.

HALLERFELD.

I have given it up for ever.

COUNTESS.

Excuse me, but that were folly, surely!

HALLERFELD.

Why so? I can live without an office under government.*

COUNTESS.

But as a means of being useful in the world, Hallerfeld?

HALLERFELD.

I do not see why I should strive to serve the world, which, in reward for such service, can offer nothing I care for.

COUNTESS.

Is, then, public respect quite worthless in your eyes?

HALLERFELD (*bitterly*).

Respect! To be respected, a man must be forty at least: that I have learned to my cost this day.

COUNTESS.

You are bitter, because you are ashamed to answer my question.

HALLERFELD.

O no! I am ready, as soon as you please, to explain clearly and openly the motives of my

* *Anstellung* has a more general sense.

actions, and that without blushing—for misfortune is, after all, no shame.

COUNTESS.

I have no desire to know all the caprices of your imagination ; but I hope you will reconsider the grounds of your resolve, when I tell you that it grieves and offends me deeply.

HALLERFELD (*coldly*).

Has your ladyship any other commands for me ?

COUNTESS.

You are going, then—really going ? (*Hallerfeld bows in silence*). You once allowed me to believe that, as a friend, I had some influence over your mind !

HALLERFELD (*with emotion*).

Let us forget the past—it can return no more.

COUNTESS.

So reserved—so abrupt—I have never yet seen you, Hallerfeld !—

HALLERFELD.

You can have no wish that I should be more unreserved—more confiding. You think it beneath your dignity to suffer the attachment of such a mere—*boy* !

COUNTESS.

Who told you this ?

HALLERFELD.

Yourself, madam, even now ;—O I understood it but too well !

COUNTESS.

I ?—when ?

HALLERFELD.

Recollect what you said about the Generalin Kirst.

COUNTESS (*as if recollecting herself*).

Of her ?—ah, right !—I remember ; I reproached her with having connected herself (according to report) with a young man who as yet has done nothing to distinguish himself.

HALLERFELD.

And who knows whether love might not inspire such a man to achieve the noblest objects ?

COUNTESS.

Methinks she might have waited the accomplishment of this miracle of love before she bound herself to him for life.

HALLERFELD (*eagerly*).

Do I understand you right ? If the youth who aspired to a beloved object far, far above him, had by industry and talent raised himself to an equality with her, you would not *then* have condemned her choice ?

COUNTESS.

His perseverance would then have proved the steadiness of his love.

HALLERFELD.

Then permit me to—forgive me if—O Countess! it is plain that you have guessed all! Be merciful! spare me the confusion of expressing what I perceive you know, and relieve me with one kind word!

COUNTESS.

Robert!

HALLERFELD (*with increasing fervour*).

I will wait—I will wait for years—till I become all you wish—only, only grant me *hope*!

COUNTESS.

Hallerfeld, you know not what you say—compose yourself!

HALLERFELD (*suddenly recovering himself*).

Heavens! what have I said—how could I for one moment imagine?—Countess, farewell! after having betrayed the secret which ought never to have passed my lips, yourself will allow that I ought to part from you for ever.

COUNTESS.

Stay, Hallerfeld!

HALLERFELD.

What! that you may enjoy the spectacle of my distraction? that were cruel—ay, and unjust; for though I am so far beneath you, and though you cannot love me—yet I have perhaps a heart worth the proving!

COUNTESS.

Who said that you were beneath me ?

HALLERFELD.

Countess !

COUNTESS.

And who said I could not love you ?

HALLERFELD.

Can it be possible ?

COUNTESS.

That I do not indeed love you ?

HALLERFELD.

Emilie !

COUNTESS.

Yes, I love you, and confess it now, because I see no other means of saving you from folly and ruin ; only therefore do I confess it—O never forget that !

HALLERFELD.

'Tis true, then—true ! O help me to understand my bliss !

COUNTESS.

No thoughts of travelling now, Hallerfeld ?

HALLERFELD.

Travel ! waste the precious time of which every hour is now of inestimable value ? I were mad to think it. No, my powers henceforth are devoted to study, diligent, unremitting,—since, as the object—the reward of all my efforts, this dear hand awaits me !

COUNTESS (*disengaging her hand*).

One moment—(*she seats herself at the writing-table, and takes pen and paper*).

HALLERFELD.

What are you going to do?

COUNTESS.

Permit me one moment—(*she reflects, and then, while Hallerfeld stands gazing on her with enthusiasm, writes a few lines rapidly on the paper before her; when she has finished, she rings a small bell—a servant appears*)—A taper!

[*The servant goes out.*

HALLERFELD.

May I know, at length——

COUNTESS.

Immediately!

[*The servant appears with a taper, which he sets on the table, and leaves the room.*

COUNTESS (*folds the paper in an envelope, and seals it—then rises*).

Hallerfeld, you ask my hand, and believe—do you not?—that without it you will never be happy?

HALLERFELD (*with energy*).

Never! never!

COUNTESS.

Well, then, if you will promise that until I have found a proper match for Ida, and you have

obtained a situation suitable to your talents, you will be silent on the subject of our conversation to day—I consent.

HALLERFELD.

And I swear that I will make myself worthy of you!

COUNTESS.

My friend, it is possible that you may yourself, at some future time, mistake the step I have taken this day. This paper contains my justification—the full explanation of the motives which have induced me thus to act. I leave it in your hands, but you will not break the seal till the day on which we are betrothed.

[*She gives him the paper.*

HALLERFELD.

O were it but to-day!

COUNTESS.

It will come—meantime we shall see each other daily; for from this hour forth I consider myself your affianced bride. [*Exit.*

HALLERFELD (*gazing after her*).

My bride! did I hear aright?—is it no dream?—has my fate so miraculously changed? O if I could but believe it all!

Enter GRÜNAU (in a travelling dress).

GRÜNAU.

I am come to take Ida; my carriage is ready, and yours, too, Baron.

HALLERFELD.

Mine? it is to no purpose, then. I'm not going to travel. I've thought better of it. I'm afraid of the Paris pavement—the London smoke;—I'm better here—far, far better. Uncle, my dear uncle, let me hug you!

GRÜNAU.

So—again! (*shrinking back*).

HALLERFELD (*embracing him*).

Excuse me, this is one of my mad days;—I'm mad with joy! and in your person I embrace the whole world! (*He hugs him, drags him round the room in a waltz, and then springs out of the door*).

GRÜNAU (*looking after him*).

Mad—quite mad!

The curtain falls.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

(TWO YEARS LATER.)

SCENE—*The same Apartment.*IDA (*entering*).

It made me feel strangely to see him again. In the last two years he has grown more manly—handsomer, I think. Fortunately, he did not know me; for when I saw him standing there—the man in office—the secretary of legation—and thought of all the childish nonsense of old times, I felt almost painfully confused—but that will not be the case another time, when other people are by, and my aunt presents him to me formally. I know not when I was so pleased as at the idea of our breakfast to-day; a *bal champêtre* in the open air is something new—for

me at least. O I will dance—dance all day, every dance from the beginning to the end! I feel so happy, and in such spirits!—it must be this beautiful weather—of course.

Enter the COUNTESS.

COUNTESS.

All is in full activity in the garden, and I think I see some carriages coming over the hill yonder—our guests probably; we shall have thirty people together in all.

IDA.

Has my uncle Grünau accepted your invitation?

COUNTESS.

I would wager anything that uncle Grünau is the first to arrive. He brings Count Bibereck with him.

IDA.

O I'm so glad! I like that Count Bibereck.

COUNTESS (*smiling*).

Why, yes, he has always abundance of pretty things for a young lady's ear.

IDA.

O it is not *that*;—but he amuses me, and besides—(*she stops suddenly*).

COUNTESS.

I have invited him to gratify Hallerfeld. They were schoolfellows, you know.

IDA.

Do you know, my dear aunt, that I have already seen Hallerfeld this morning?

COUNTESS.

Indeed! where did you see him?

IDA.

In the village, and before the door of old Margaret's house. I had persuaded her, for the first time, to venture into the open air: he stopped as soon as he saw me, and looked at me for some time without stirring: but he did not approach, nor did he speak. So I suppose he did not recognise me.

COUNTESS.

Probably not, for I doubt if he knows that you are here.

IDA.

Yes; I came from school, I remember, just as he was appointed *attaché* at Vienna; and you have not, I suppose, mentioned me in your letters to him?

COUNTESS.

Why, I do not think that during the whole year any particular good or evil fortune has befallen you, sufficient for the subject-matter of a letter.

IDA (*with a forced smile*).

I dare say he hardly recollects that I once lived under the same roof with him.

COUNTESS.

So much the better, for it will be like making a new acquaintance to-day Have you arranged your toilette ?

IDA.

I intend to be dressed simply—quite simply.

COUNTESS.

Simply—yes ; but with elegance and taste, I hope ?

IDA.

O surely ! and at this moment I cannot decide between two dresses—the white and the blue.

COUNTESS.

Choose then, for my sake, the one that is most becoming. I wish you to appear to advantage to-day—you understand !

IDA.

O trust me for that ! you know, dear aunt, I am not vainer than is absolutely necessary : but at a ball, and a ball by daylight, one would not be the worst looking. (*She goes to the door, and returns.*) Don't you think, aunt, it would be best to wear the white dress ? it is *sans pretension*, and looks so fresh !

COUNTESS.

Yes, right ! (*She goes towards the writing-table—Ida going, stops, as meditating, and then turns back.*)

IDA.

On reflection, dear aunt, I think, after all, the blue is the prettiest.

COUNTESS.

Dress yourself as you please, my love. (*Ida goes out—the Countess seats herself at the writing-table, opens a small writing-case, and takes out a parcel of letters.*) His letters to me during the last twelvemonth—truly a respectable collection. Let us see—(*she opens two or three*)—July, last year, four pages—five—six pages—“Most beloved of human beings!”—etcetera. In December two pages—three—“My dearest Countess,” and so forth. In April this year, so—one page—“Ever honoured friend!”—ah, April was a bad month, it seems! But what have we here?—alas! worse—in June last—half a page—business—want of time—and “My dear madam!”—O men, men!—but is it your fault if the enthusiasm* to which you give the name of love does not last

* *Schwärmerei*, with the verb, *Schwärmen*, and the adjective, *Schwärmerische*, one of those beautiful German expressions for which we have absolutely no equivalent. *Schwärmen* is to be in a state of enthusiasm, of fantastic or romantic excitement. Though we have not the word in English, we are not so absolutely without the thing, as some Germans affect to believe. I know English women, and men too, quite as capable of conjugating the verb *Schwärmen* through all its moods and tenses, as any German I ever met with. We make, however, rather a less serious affair of it.

for ever? Ought we not even to be thankful when such feelings subside into calm friendship, and not into absolute indifference?

Enter HALLERFELD.

HALLERFELD.

I do not disturb you, my dear Countess?

COUNTESS.

Not in the least; I was turning over your letters.

HALLERFELD.

You make me ashamed: I have lately been an idle correspondent: but as I knew I should have the happiness of seeing you again in a short time——

COUNTESS.

No need of apologies between friends; and, besides, your return has given me so much pleasure, that I cannot be angry with you if I would. Pray sit down. (*He draws a chair, and seats himself at a very respectful distance.*) And now tell me something of Vienna,—were you pleased with it?

HALLERFELD.

Where all is gay around, we must needs be gay too, without prejudice to our longing after absent friends.

COUNTESS (*smiling*).

My Eldorado here will not appear very

brilliant in comparison with the city of the Cæsars?

HALLERFELD.

I cannot tell you how I felt when I first saw at a distance the spire of your village church: all the recollections of old happy times rushed over my mind, and tears filled my eyes.

COUNTESS.

You will remain with us some time?

HALLERFELD.

I can hardly say; for as I told you yesterday, they have appointed me secretary of legation, and I may consequently expect every hour to be ordered off to Frankfurt.

COUNTESS.

I see we must make up our minds to lose you shortly.

HALLERFELD.

If the idea of parting from me be indeed painful, it is in your power, dearest Countess, to avert it.

COUNTESS.

How so?

HALLERFELD.

By crowning at length my early wishes, and consenting to be mine for ever! (*He rises.*)

COUNTESS (*with emotion*).

Robert!—and if I were now inclined to yield to your wishes?

HALLERFELD.

I should feel myself no less honoured than happy.

COUNTESS.

You remain constant to your first intentions ?

HALLERFELD.

Immovable !

COUNTESS (*tears in her eyes*).

I cannot express how deeply I feel it. (*She breaks off abruptly, and adds with a changed voice.*) Would you not like to visit your favourite spots in the garden before the company arrive ?

HALLERFELD.

I have already visited all my old haunts. I have even been down to the village, and there I became a witness of a really touching scene ; the door of a poor cottage opened, and an old and apparently sick woman appeared, supported by a young and well-dressed girl ; the old woman was visibly revived by the warmth and freshness of the air, and the young girl placed an arm-chair for her in the quietest, cleanest spot, drew a shawl close round her, and placed a cushion under her feet ; she reminded me of some sweet sister of mercy ; and as I looked at her more attentively, I thought I had seen her before ; but I did not venture to speak to her. Can you tell me who it could possibly be ?

COUNTESS (*smiling*).

No other than your old friend Ida.

HALLERFELD.

Ida! I did not know she was staying with you?

COUNTESS.

For the last year. You would have seen her yesterday evening, if you had not arrived so very late.

HALLERFELD.

Ida?—yes, you are in the right—it was certainly her. She appears to be much improved.

COUNTESS.

Yes, praise her, Robert!—praise my Ida, if you would please *me*! I *am* proud of her—proud of her beauty—of her education—yet more of her heart. The old woman whom you saw her leading out of doors for the first time to-day, she has, by her own care, with help of her own little medicine-chest, recovered from a dangerous sickness, and felt all the delight of having preserved a mother to her family.

HALLERFELD.

I remember she had always a kind heart—as a child.

COUNTESS.

And, as a wife, I trust will soon form the happiness of a deserving man. I may confide it to

you, Robert: I have an excellent match in view for her.

HALLERFELD (*as suddenly struck*).

So!—indeed!—and may I ask who it is?

COUNTESS.

That I cannot tell you at present; for the person to whom I allude has not yet declared himself.

HALLERFELD.

Not yet?

COUNTESS.

But I think he will ere long. This, to say the truth, is the reason that I at once acceded to your proposal just now. Ida's marriage removes the last obstacle to our union.

HALLERFELD.

And do you believe that Ida loves the man you have fixed upon?

COUNTESS.

Yes; I have reason to think she likes him.

Enter COUNT BIBERECK.

COUNT BIBERECK (*to the Countess*).

In obedience to your ladyship's invitation, I have not ridden, but flown to you: uncle Grünau's old blacks seem to have sympathised in my impatience, and——

COUNTESS.

Look around you, my dear Count: do you see no one here but me?

COUNT (*looking round*).

Hallerfeld!—is it really you? Welcome back to your own country!—a thousand times welcome!*

HALLERFELD.

Alfred!

COUNT.

Be quiet! Let me look at you—(*he examines him from head to foot*)—yes, I'm satisfied; so now—let me embrace you! (*They embrace.*)

HALLERFELD.

Tell me how it is that you never wrote me a line in my absence?

COUNT.

I never write to any one; for in general one writes the most absurd things without being aware of it at the time; and if after a while such letters fall in one's way, one can never conceive how one came to write them.

HALLERFELD.

How is your kinsman Rudolf?—and your cousin Wilhelmina?—and our old Professor Rode?—and your friend Lieutenant Milden?

* The two friends address each other with the familiar *Du*.

COUNT.

All dead !

HALLERFELD.

Dead ?

COUNT.

Consider them so for the present, else we shall be talking so much of our friends that we shall have no time to talk of ourselves.

COUNTESS.

Gentlemen, I will leave you together, if you will allow me. I must see how my little preparations go on, and will not interrupt your conversation. *[Exit.*

HALLERFELD (*looking after the Countess with a sigh*).

She is still very handsome—the Countess—*très bien conservée*—don't you think so, Alfred ?

COUNT.

I have not thought about it: the charms of thirty or forty pass by me all unheeded.

HALLERFELD.

Then I pity you: for there are women who, even at that age, are really interesting.

COUNT.

May be so ; but, now we are on the subject of women and beauty—you have been a whole year at Vienna—charming women there, Hallerfeld, hah ! Have you escaped heart-whole from them

all, and come back to us free—have you?—now speak the truth?

HALLERFELD.

There were many who attracted my attention—my admiration, but not one who had power to fix me.

COUNT.

No!—I'm sorry for it!

HALLERFELD.

Why so?

COUNT.

Why, you see—because—I fancy you may have some one in view.

HALLERFELD.

Possibly I may.

COUNT (*with vexation*).

There, I thought so!

HALLERFELD.

I do not understand you!

COUNT.

And she's here—close by—is she not?—and it has been a settled thing some time—eh?

HALLERFELD (*looking at him with amazement*).

Alfred!

COUNT.

Settled with the girl's family—eh?

HALLERFELD.

The girl?

COUNT.

Why, is it not Ida that you are thinking of?

HALLERFELD.

Ida !—no.

COUNT.

Not Ida !—you've taken a millstone from my heart !

HALLERFELD.

Do you love her ?

COUNT.

Almost—at least I never yet saw a girl who pleased me so well. Beauty, intelligence, simplicity, accomplishments, goodness of heart—she unites all the qualities that the most reasonable, or even the most unreasonable man could ask in a wife ; and often as I have rebelled against the marriage yoke, I would not swear but that she might bring me to some desperate step at last. Have you ever heard her sing ?

HALLERFELD (*with a half smile*).

Formerly.

COUNT.

O you must hear her now ! but you have seen her dance ?

HALLERFELD.

I only arrived a few hours ago.

COUNT.

The ball to-day will be a dangerous trial for

my freedom ; for when she dances I am a lost man. But—(*looking at him*)—you grow more and more thoughtful, my friend ; and in truth I am a fool to boast the girl off, and raise myself up a rival perhaps.

HALLERFELD.

Make yourself easy ; even supposing that Ida charmed me as she has charmed you, it were for me too late.

COUNT.

You are no longer free ?

HALLERFELD.

I am bound indissolubly.

COUNT (*embracing him in a rapture*).

Delightful ! and may one know to whom ?

HALLERFELD.

For the present, that is a secret ; but in a short time I think I shall be able to divulge it—(*looking at him significantly*)—perhaps even this very day.

COUNT.

And on what does it depend ?

HALLERFEED.

Even on yourself.

COUNT.

On a trial of my discretion ?

HALLERFELD.

I know what I mean. (*Aside.*) The husband destined for Ida : I cannot doubt it.

COUNT.

Do I know your choice?

HALLERFELD.

To answer that were to betray too much.

COUNT.

Is she handsome?

HALLERFELD.

As to beauty—tastes vary.

COUNT.

And you marry for love, really?

HALLERFELD.

From respect—friendship—gratitude!

COUNT (*with a shrug*).

Ah, good Lord!

HALLERFELD.

The exalted feelings I have mentioned are better calculated to secure the happiness of life than all the enthusiasm of passion.

COUNT.

Ah! philosophy!—you know I never could understand anything of philosophy from our school days.

HALLERFELD.

It is possible that you might find fault with my choice.

COUNT.

Very possible indeed.

HALLERFELD.

But by-and-bye you will envy me.

COUNT.

That I doubt.

HALLERFELD.

And even supposing I should be less happy than I once hoped, I can never repent having adhered to a sacred promise.

COUNT.

Ay; but who would give his sacred promise so lightly?

Enter GRÜNAU.

GRÜNAU.

At last I am in a condition to produce myself before company. The dust—the intolerable dust—it has taken a quarter of an hour to brush my collar, and half an hour at least to shake it out of my wig. Ah, Baron von Hallerfeld! I have the honour to salute you!

HALLERFELD.

I am rejoiced to see you so well, and in such spirits, Baron von Grünau!

GRÜNAU.

Could almost fancy you are grown since I saw you—eh?

HALLERFELD (*smiling*).

I can hardly think so.

GRÜNAU.

Seen St. Stephens?—driven to the Prater?—been to the Augarten?—*—heard Strauss—eh? Must tell me all about it when we have time; for the present, I will only ask one thing—do you remain here? or do you intend to leave us?

HALLERFELD.

I am ordered to Frankfurt.

GRÜNAU.

Good—very good! A young man must see the world—work hard—eh?

Enter the COUNTESS, leading in Ida dressed for the ball.

COUNTESS (*drawing Ida forward, who hangs back timidly*).

Here, Baron von Hallerfeld, let me present to you an old acquaintance.

HALLERFELD (*kissing Ida's hand*).

Have I, then, the happiness of being remembered?

* St. Stephen's, I need hardly explain, is the principal church at Vienna: the Prater is the celebrated park, or public promenade, on an island of the Danube: it derived its appellation from the Spanish word *prado*, when Spanish was the fashionable language at Vienna. The Augarten is a place of popular resort adjoining the Prater.

IDA.

Do you think me so forgetful? I am glad, after so long an absence, to have the pleasure —

HALLERFELD (*smiling*).

If I do not mistake, I have already had the pleasure of seeing you this morning; but you did not observe me?

IDA (*quickly*).

O yes!—(*she stops in confusion.*)

HALLERFELD.

Indeed! Do not blush that I surprised you in the performance of an act of charity.

IDA (*smiling*).

The old woman was a little unreasonable—that's all. She wanted to throw her shawl off, and put her feet on the cold stones. I assure you I had some trouble with her.

COUNT (*to Ida*).

Have you been entertaining yourself with another old woman? (*To Hallerfeld.*) The old village wives, I must tell you, are the Lady Ida's favourite companions.

IDA (*playfully*).

Am I not the nearest of kin to the lady of the manor? I share her privileges, and ought I not to share her duties too?

[*A servant enters, and speaks in a low voice to the Countess.*

COUNTESS.

All is prepared for our breakfast, and my guests are in readiness. What do you think,—shall we sit down to table, or have dancing first?

COUNT.

Dancing first: man must earn his bread before he eats it. (*To Ida.*) May I beg the honour of your hand for the first waltz?

IDA (*glances involuntarily at Hallerfeld, as she gives her hand to the Count.*)

With pleasure.

COUNTESS.

Let us go, then.

[*The folding-doors of the back scene fly open; guests are seen promenading in the garden, and music is heard at a distance; the Countess and Count Bibereck, leading Ida, pass out; the doors remain open, and towards the close of the following scene the music of a waltz is heard, but not loud enough to interrupt the conversation, and Ida and the Count are seen, with others, dancing in the back ground.*]

GRÜNAU (*looking at the Count and Ida as they go out.*)

Charming couple—lovely pair—eh?

HALLERFELD.

Who?

GRÜNAU.

Why, Count Alfred and Ida, to be sure. Don't blab; but I do hope to bring this marriage about. The Count talked of my niece in the carriage—in a sort of way—eh?—(*winking.*)

HALLERFELD.

And does the Countess know of your project?

GRÜNAU.

To be sure she does: nothing to be done here without the Countess—eh?

GRÜNAU.

And she approves?—

GRÜNAU.

She's not against us; but she insists that nothing shall be said of it to either party, and matters shall arrange themselves, if it so please Heaven.

HALLERFELD.

There she is perfectly in the right. Alfred is a good fellow.

GRÜNAU.

Capital beau for the ladies!

HALLERFELD.

To whom I wish all the happiness in the world, most sincerely.

GRÜNAU.

You say that, now, with such a solemn face, one might doubt it were really true.

HALLERFELD.

I hope you do not think me capable——

GRÜNAU.

Not of envying your friend a good fortune left to him, nor a good place—no; but a pretty girl? such a thing were possible—eh? and, as one might say, in the common course of things.

HALLERFELD.

Baron von Grünan!

GRÜNAU.

But, in any case, you have no right to complain; for you might have had my niece if you had chosen. If you had but opened your mouth two years ago, you'd have had her; the girl liked you—I liked you—and the aunt must, if only for shame, have consented; but you chose to be fastidious, and now she's found another.

HALLERFELD.

Well, I must submit.

GRÜNAU.

Apropos, talking of our lady aunt, don't you remember the time you fancied yourself in love with her?—ha! ha!—and about Alva and Don Carlos?—d'ye remember—eh? Can't help laugh-

ing when I think of it—ha! ha! We were young in those days—eh, Baron? very young!

HALLERFELD (*seriously*.)

Young!—yes, and perhaps wiser *then* than now: youth has a spontaneously just appreciation of all that is really noble and good, which often fails us in later years.

GRÜNAU (*laughing*).

And your romantic melancholy—your being ready to challenge me—and your famous *coup de théâtre*——

HALLERFELD.

The demonstrations of the feeling might be ridiculous: the feeling itself not so.

GRÜNAU.

Lucky you're going off to Frankfurt, or we might apprehend a second paroxysm. That's a capital waltz: you would like to be taking a turn now, and here I keep you with my talk.

HALLERFELD.

I never dance.

GRÜNAU.

Not dance? ay, I thought so: like all the rest of you young gentry. Have to govern the world—no time for dancing!—may take to it perhaps at fifty, and then find it too late—eh? There goes Ida—flying round with the Count. That's

youth—youth all alive and merry, as it ought to be. Do you see there?

HALLERFELD.

Yes, I see.

GRÜNAU.

If you won't dance, at least come with me amongst them all.

HALLERFELD.

Will you go before?—I'll follow immediately.

GRÜNAU (*aside as he goes out*).

A strange young fellow this!

[*Exit through the folding-doors.*]

HALLERFELD.

I feel myself in an ill-humour—fretted—impatient—and cannot myself tell why; is it that unpleasant feeling we all experience when we return a changed being among people and things that remain unchanged? or—is it possible?—is it the remembrance of the bright and for ever vanished dreams of my youth that oppresses me? Enough, my heart is crushed—narrowed: I wish I were far hence, and in active life again!

IDA (*entering from the garden*).

Baron Hallerfeld, my aunt has been asking for you, and has sent me here to tell you that you *must* dance; that she reckoned on you for her ball.

HALLERFELD.

The Countess must excuse me : I have always been an indifferent dancer, and am now quite out of practice.

IDA.

But a ball-champêtre—only among friends ?

HALLERFELD.

I have really abjured dancing altogether.

IDA.

As you please—I have delivered my message. *[She turns to go.]*

HALLERFELD (*detaining her*).

Will you go ? O stay one moment ! to see you there before me carries me back to former and happier days.

IDA.

You love, then, to remember those old times ?

HALLERFELD.

Too well !—the realities of life never fulfil the promises of Hope, and therefore it is that the days of hope are the brightest in our existence : from my inmost heart I could wish even one of those days back again !

IDA.

One of such days as you spent with us two years ago ? but, my dear Baron, you were then so—so gloomy and so melancholy !

HALLERFELD (*smiling*).

I was melancholy because I liked it—grief itself was then a sort of joy.

IDA (*quickly*).

Yes—I know—

HALLERFELD.

You know?

IDA.

Yes, I—I think—that all the young are alike in certain things.

HALLERFELD.

Then you have yourself sometimes felt the pleasure of sadness?

IDA.

Yes, sometimes I have almost wished to have a real downright grief, or that somebody would really vex and contradict me that I might have some just right to sit down and cry to my heart's content. But then, understand, that was not always my natural disposition, and as soon as the cloud passed over, I was again gay as a lark.

HALLERFELD.

Do you remember how we used to water your aunt's flowers together?

IDA.

Surely, I remember it well: and how you climbed the tree to get me the linnet's nest.

HALLERFELD.

Do you recollect that ?

IDA.

One of them is still alive.

HALLERFELD.

And in what despair you were to be sent off to school—do you remember ?

IDA.

Yes ! O you are still the same Hallerfeld !—not the statesman—the ambassador's secretary. Would you believe that I was quite frightened this morning at the idea of appearing before you ? but now that is all over, and I only wish you could stay with us a long, long time.

HALLERFELD (*taking her hand*).

No one can wish that more than myself: I am happier here than I have felt for years. (*Leading her to the window.*) When I look out upon those hills, that river, those meadows—do you remember it was in yonder field that we had the shooting-match two years ago ?

IDA.

When Big Michael carried off the prize ?

[*The Countess appears at the open door.*

HALLERFELD (*his attention caught by the inscription on the window-pane*).

Robert ! my name ?—what have we here ?

IDA (*frightened, attempts to draw him away*).

O nothing—how should I know ?

HALLERFELD.

'Tis your own handwriting; "Farewell, Robert!" meaning me?

IDA (*in confusion*).

My aunt is waiting for you.

HALLERFELD.

There was no other Robert in the house, so I shall take it to myself without scruple. When was it written?

IDA.

O, when I was a child!

HALLERFELD (*playfully*).

In mirth or in sadness?

IDA (*reproachfully*).

O Hallerfeld!

HALLERFELD.

On the day you left us, was it not?

IDA.

I believe so.

HALLERFELD.

You were sorry, then, to think you should not see me again?

IDA.

Yes—surely——

HALLERFELD.

And therefore I may believe you felt some kindness for me?

IDA.

I feel kindly—to—to everybody.

HALLERFELD.

Angel! (*Kissing her hand, drops it suddenly.*)
Whither am I going?

COUNTESS (*advancing*).

I see I must come myself to seek you, Robert, for you do not obey my ambassadress here: my little fête, without boast I may say it, is really very pretty. It is given in your honour, and you really *must* dance.

HALLERFELD.

I have left off dancing for the last two years.

COUNTESS.

You must make an exception to-day; the couples are standing up, and if you do not join them, Ida will be left without a partner.

HALLERFELD.

Only your commands, believe me, could induce me——

COUNTESS (*playfully*).

Well, then, I command. Ida, go on before—in two minutes I will join you with the Baron.

IDA (*kissing the hand of the Countess*).

What a delightful day, dearest aunt!

[*She goes dancing out through the folding doors.*]

COUNTESS (*looking at him*).

Robert, you do not appear in spirits!

HALLERFELD.

How so, my dear Countess?

COUNTESS (*smiling significantly*).

But I think I know a means to restore them.

HALLERFELD.

My dear Countess——

COUNTESS.

I believe we may celebrate our betrothing this very evening—what do you say to that?

HALLERFELD.

This very evening?—impossible!

COUNTESS.

Yes, for the gentleman to whom I alluded this morning, whom I wish to see married to Ida, has at length declared himself.

HALLERFELD.

Is he here, then?

COUNTESS.

He is. I think I have read Ida's heart, and do not doubt that she will accept his proposals: so that from this moment I consider her as a bride, and may now think of my own nuptials, which in a few hours I will announce to our company,—(*pauses*)—that is, if you approve of it.

HALLERFELD (*rousing himself with an effort*).

Can you doubt it?

COUNTESS (*taking his hand affectionately*).

I have no doubts! have you the sealed paper which contains my justification?

HALLERFELD.

It lies in my writing-case.

COUNTESS.

Do not forget to have it about you this evening. I am going to invite the company to assemble again in my garden at seven. O Robert! now may I say that this is indeed the happiest day of my life!

[*She goes out.*

HALLERFELD.

Be still, my heart! honour and gratitude point the way;—I obey their dictates!

[*He goes out after the Countess.*

The curtain falls.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE—*The same Apartment.*

SALOME (*entering*).

I COULD only see the dancing at a distance, but I enjoyed it for all that. The other young ladies might prank themselves in flowers and ribbons, but our Ida was still the prettiest of them all; and then she danced!—'twas for all the world like one of them little loves with wings at their shoulders, that one sees painted on the walls of the pavilion among the heathen gods and goddesses,—one did not hear her foot fall. Count Bibereck seemed vastly attentive, but Baron von Hallerfeld couldn't take his eyes off her. That Baron von Hallerfeld, now, of all the young gentlemen, he still pleases me best; and there's something

in my heart always whispering that he and no other, let people do what they will, is to marry my young lady at last. I don't think, for my part, that she would care to have any man but him—no, I don't think she would.

Enter HALLERFELD (without observing Salome).

HALLERFELD (*aside*).

This evening, she said, this evening am I irrevocably bound! and just on this very day am I obliged to confess to myself that the conversation with Ida has shown me how far I have been mistaken in my thoughts and feelings. Fortunately I shall not be obliged to live near her, for she will marry, and I shall go far, far away. (*He stands lost in thought*).

SALOME (*curtsies*).

Good evening, Baron von Hallerfeld, a very good evening—do you remember me?

HALLERFELD.

How could I forget Mamsell Salome? I am heartily glad to see you again.

SALOME.

Glad to see me! no one can deny that your lordship was always kind and civil, and so you are still, I see.

HALLERFELD.

As I ought to be.

SALOME.

And truly, my lord, I deserve that you should be a wee bit friendly towards me, for I'm devoted to your honour with all my heart. Only ask my young lady if I have not talked about you to her every day.

HALLERFELD.

And your young lady, did she too speak of me?

SALOME.

That is just what, perhaps, I ought not to tell you.

HALLERFELD.

Why not? am I not an old acquaintance—a friend of the family?—speak, my dear Mamsell Salome!

SALOME (*aside*).

His dear Salome! there's no resisting that! (*Aloud.*) Why, when we did talk of you, I must confess my young lady was always the one to begin.

HALLERFELD (*joyfully*).

Indeed! (*More seriously.*) Your young lady is now eighteen.

SALOME.

Yes, indeed!—ah, that makes me almost an old woman!

HALLERFELD.

She is greatly improved.

SALOME.

I think so, indeed !

HALLERFELD (*with a sigh*).

And she will soon marry !

SALOME (*smiling*).

High time she should ; but *whom* will she marry ?

HALLERFELD.

Count Bibereck is paying his addresses to her.

SALOME.

O, he? —

HALLERFELD.

The Countess thinks that Lady Ida is by no means indifferent to him.

SALOME.

Why, certainly, she talks with him more willingly than with others, but the Count need not take it all to himself ; oh no, there's a reason for it !

HALLERFELD.

What reason ?

SALOME.

Well, I ought not to tell you that, either—but what help ? you've opened my heart, you have, so that I can hide nothing. You see, the Count

is your friend, so she has always had news of you at second-hand, and well she knew how to get it all out of him ;—cunning, ah !

HALLERFELD (*with emotion*).

And that was the reason ?

SALOME.

And then she has a little bird, which you gave her, and that she loves, I think in my heart, better than she loves me.

HALLERFELD.

Ida—dear sweet Ida !

SALOME.

That touches you, does it not ?

HALLERFELD.

It surprises me.

SALOME.

Ah, I could tell you a great deal more—but it won't do ; it's not right nor proper. If, two years ago, there was nothing done, it wasn't her fault ; she didn't make no objection, and therefore it was that she was thrust out of the house—neck and heels.*

HALLERFELD.

Indeed ?

SALOME.

However, there's no great mischief done, and you are now a man of the world, and needn't be

* Hals und Kopf, *neck and head*, is the German Idiom.

commanded by nobody. I say no more ; but if I only live to see the happiness—the only happiness I wish for—then I would close my eyes willingly on this world. [She goes out.

HALLERFELD (*after a pause*).

She loves me—Ida loves me ! and I, fool that I am, have flung away the happiness of my whole life ! How could I fail to see, at the first glance, that she, and she only, was the angel sent by heaven to offer me peace and blessedness ? O mistaken enthusiasm of youth, for which, as a man, I must now suffer the penalty ! Suffer ? and does then such a miserable fate await me, in the hand of that noble-minded, excellent woman, to whom I am bound by the deepest reverence, who saved me from the snares of the world—who roused my mind to laudable activity and usefulness ?—to whom I owe all I have accomplished—all that I now am ? The Countess loves me sincerely—is handsome still—is gifted, good, amiable ; ah ! but these very qualities which I boast in her, Ida, her charming *élève*, possesses them all—and with them, instead of the serious experience of the Countess, all the joyous simplicity of youth. I ought to have met Ida no more : but since I have met her—(*in a resolute tone*)—I will at least show what a man of honour *can* do in the strife of feeling. Never shall the Countess

know of this aberration of my heart; and Ida shall learn from myself how I stand with her aunt; thus, perhaps, I may destroy in her young heart the germ of a passion of which she is scarcely aware herself, and fulfil my duty to both.

IDA (*entering hurriedly*).

IDA.

Pray excuse me, Baron, for coming upon you so abruptly; I see I have startled you.

HALLERFELD.

I was lost in thought.

IDA.

I was going to ask the maître d'hôtel* if all is in order for the supper this evening.

HALLERFELD (*detaining her*).

All;—the maître d'hôtel has just told me so himself.

IDA.

If I only knew why my aunt is going to give another entertainment to-day! we are all a little tired after the dance this morning.

HALLERFELD.

She has possibly some especial motive for what she does.

* Der Haushofmeister.

IDA.

Do you know, I begin to suspect so?—some very particular motive, and a pleasant one too; for she goes tripping along in the garden like a girl of sixteen, and makes her arrangements and gives her orders with such a smiling air, as who should say, “Rejoice with me, you have good cause!” Do you think it can be my aunt Freising who is coming to take us by surprise?

HALLERFELD.

No, it is not that which occupies the Countess at this moment.

IDA.

You are then in the secret?

HALLERFELD.

I am.

IDA (*sportively*).

I don't mean to ask you to betray it, but couldn't you give me just—the least—little hint?

HALLERFELD (*very gravely*).

That is exactly what I wished to do.

IDA.

But you make such a serious face about it!

HALLERFELD.

It is serious.

IDA.

Serious? and my aunt is so joyous,—gay as a child?

HALLERFELD.

What is serious is not always sad, Ida. How old do you think your aunt is?

IDA (*looking at him with surprise*).

I don't know, exactly—but I suppose about forty.

HALLERFELD.

Ahem! —she is a good deal younger.

IDA.

May be so; but what has my aunt's age to do with it at all?

HALLERFELD.

Your aunt has been a widow now for some years; she is rich, free, and worthy to captivate any man: and would you not look upon it as quite natural if she were to think of forming a second union?

IDA.

My aunt? it is not right of you to speak so!

HALLERFELD.

And why?

IDA.

My aunt?—it is not possible!

HALLERFELD.

Then, what would you say if it were really the case? you would not make it a subject of reproach to your aunt—would you?

IDA.

I should never presume to censure any action of my aunt, whatever it might be, for I know that she never acts but from principle: but, as to what you have just told me, you must excuse me if I cannot believe it—no, never!

HALLERFELD.

You will believe it this evening.

IDA.

Pray, Baron, do not make me so—so unhappy!

HALLERFELD.

Unhappy—and why? why should it make you unhappy that your aunt marries again?—can she not be as kind to you, as careful for your welfare, as ever?

IDA.

I do not doubt it; but I never yet have thought of such a thing as possible, and I know not how I shall reconcile myself to it, if it happens.

HALLERFELD.

You owe a great deal to your aunt.

IDA (*with animation*).

Say, rather, that I owe her all, that I am the work of her hands! and therefore it is that I look up to her as to a mother.

HALLERFELD.

And would you not rejoice, for her sake, if,

after the sorrows she has encountered in the world, she should meet with such happiness as is best suited to her character—if, after having lived so long for others, she were to begin to live for herself?

IDA.

Robert, I did not mean *that*—in truth, I did not ! but I can hardly—I know not why—but I cannot think of my aunt as married, without a disagreeable feeling ; and yet, if her happiness depended on another marriage, I would lay down my life to secure it. So now speak openly—tell me all, at once—for that you know all, is plain.

HALLERFELD.

The Countess has been engaged for the last two years, and will make known her choice this day.

IDA.

For two years ?

HALLERFELD.

Yes—it was for your sake that she has hitherto put off her marriage.

IDA.

For my sake ?

HALLERFELD.

She wished to finish your education before she took other duties on herself.

IDA.

O my dear good aunt!—and who is the bridegroom?

HALLERFELD.

A man who, like yourself, owes everything to her.

IDA.

Robert!

HALLERFELD.

Even myself.

IDA (*utters a suppressed cry—but instantly commanding herself*).

You—Hallerfeld!

HALLERFELD.

Yes! and never believe that she sought, out of mere vanity, to lead in her chains a youth like myself, as her enemies once insinuated: she never by word or look betrayed her affection for me; only when, in all the desperation of a youthful passion, I stood before her, and left her no choice but between my love and my ruin—did she first open her heart to me.

IDA (*struggling with her emotions*).

A heart that—that every deserving man might envy you, and that you must make happy—happy, Robert, if ever I am to respect you.

HALLERFELD.

What ails you, Ida?

IDA.

Nothing—never mind me—it will soon be over.

Enter the COUNTESS.

COUNTESS.

All is ready for my little banquet, and the guests will soon assemble: have you the paper about you, Robert—the paper—you know?

HALLERFELD.

I have left it in my room.

COUNTESS.

Will you go for it, and bring it down into the garden, where I shall wait for you? Now, Robert, the moment you wished for is at length arrived! was I not right when I said that two years would soon pass away?

HALLERFELD (*kissing her hand*).

And, to the end of my life, you shall find me as to-day—ever grateful—ever devoted.

[*He hurries out.*]

The COUNTESS—IDA.

IDA (*aside*).

He is not happy—no—and, for the future, I must live at a distance from my aunt's husband: that is what the feeling of my heart dictates; I cannot be deceived in it.

COUNTESS.

Ida, you are silent; you do not understand the meaning of all this.

IDA.

Dearest aunt, I was then thinking of something very different.

COUNTESS (*looking at her*).

And not very agreeable, as it seems.

IDA.

Assuredly nothing pleasant—and I feel some difficulty in telling it to you.

COUNTESS (*caressingly*).

What!—your old mamma?

IDA.

O you have always been so tender to me—so considerate—so kind—I shall never, never forget it all! and even if the time must come when I can no longer have the happiness of passing my life at your side—— [*She bursts into tears.*]

COUNTESS.

Ida! what change is this?

IDA.

But I will pray, every returning morning, for your welfare—and I shall be heard, and you will be happy! for all that you have done for me—your orphan Ida—God will bless you!

[*She throws herself into her arms, and hides her face upon her bosom.*]

COUNTESS.

My love, I never doubted either your affection or your gratitude; but what has caused this excitement since I saw you?

IDA.

Ah, dearest aunt, you must hear me say all this, that you may not think me insensible to all I owe you—if now—I entreat——

[*She stops short.*]

COUNTESS.

If you entreat?

IDA.

That you will allow me——

[*Stops short.*]

COUNTESS.

Allow—what?

IDA.

Allow me go to my uncle Grünau.

COUNTESS.

How came such a thought into your mind, Ida?

IDA.

You know that more than two years ago, after my father's death, my uncle expressed a wish to have me with him. He is old, childless—I think my society would be a comfort to him.

COUNTESS.

And what it would be to me, Ida—you do *not* think?

IDA.

Not so much as to my uncle—and, in a short time, nothing.

COUNTESS.

In a short time, nothing?—Confess, Ida, that Robert has betrayed to you the secret of our preparations for this evening?

IDA.

He has! he has! O do not be angry with him!

COUNTESS.

And you disapprove of my intentions?

IDA.

How could I, dear aunt, presume to judge of any intention of yours?

COUNTESS.

And yet, as it seems, it is my present position* which impels you to leave me.

IDA (*confused*).

How can you think so?

COUNTESS.

I wished much to have found an eligible *partie* for you, my love, before I announced my own marriage; but I can no longer defer it; for the Baron is under the immediate necessity of leaving us.

IDA.

I understand——

* Mein Brautstand.

COUNTESS.

And yet, who knows but that you may be married before me, Ida?—the attachment of Count Bibereck becomes daily more serious.

IDA.

O aunt! I hope the man is incapable of serious love.

COUNTESS.

You *hope* it?

IDA.

For his sake I hope it, for I could never return his love.

COUNTESS.

No! and yet, hitherto, you seemed to take pleasure in his society.

IDA.

O yes—that was —but to-day—at the ball—he made me almost dislike him.

COUNTESS.

And yet I flattered myself——

IDA.

O no—no! Why, after all, must I be married? I am rich—and when I take the management of my estate, I can make my tenants happy, I can superintend the schools, and do good to the poor. O, in any case I have a sphere of active usefulness and content before me!

COUNTESS (*with deep emotion*).

You think so, Ida?

IDA.

Yes, I think so, dearest aunt : and my request to go to my uncle has not offended you—has it?

COUNTESS (*struggling to speak*).

On the contrary——

IDA.

However distant from you, I shall rejoice in your happiness : do you not believe this?

COUNTESS.

I do believe it.

IDA.

And if ever—which heaven forbid!—misfortune should happen to you—if you are sad, and have no one in whose bosom you can repose your grief, then send for me, or write me two lines—only a word, and I will fly to you—at least to weep with you, if I can do no more!

COUNTESS (*folds her in her arms, and presses her fondly to her bosom—after a pause.*)

Ida, you have well-nigh tempted me into a sin. I could be almost proud of that heart which, after all, I did not give you! But enough, for if we speak longer in this strain, we shall go on crying like two children, and I will have no more tears to day; I will wholly enjoy the moment which awaits me.

IDA.

I have not yet offered my congratulations—
accept them now, as warm as they are sincere!

[*Embraces her aunt.*]

COUNTESS.

I accept them,—you have, indeed, reason to
congratulate me, Ida! Now let us go.

[*They go out.*]

[*The scene changes to the garden, decorated as if for a festival, with garlands of flowers, &c.—Chairs are set.*]

GRÜNAU—COUNT BIBERECK—*several* LADIES and
GENTLEMEN: *in the distance* SALOME, *with a crowd of* PEASANTS, SERVANTS, &c.

A LADY (*waving a green bough in her hand*).

O these gnats! these detestable gnats!—this is
what people call pleasure! I had rather far
have gone back to town; they give the Somnam-
bula to-night.

ANOTHER LADY.

To confess the truth, I have no dislike to stay-
ing this evening: I rather suspect it will turn
out more interesting than we anticipated.

[*The ladies whisper together.*]

GRÜNAU.

Tell me what in the name of fortune is going
on here? That some mystery is in hand, is beyond

doubt—but what? If you know anything of it, Count, help me out of this puzzle, for I am half afraid that some nonsense or other will be the issue of it all.

COUNT (*sullenly*).

Why, indeed, for that matter, good sense becomes daily more uncommon in the world.

GRÜNAU.

The Countess would not allow me to see her to-day.

COUNT.

Give you joy—the fewer people one sees the better.

GRÜNAU.

Why so?

COUNT.

They bore one.

GRÜNAU.

You are out of humour?

COUNT.

Horribly!

GRÜNAU.

With or without reason?

COUNT (*striking his forehead*).

O with—with!

GRÜNAU.

You alarm me!

COUNT.

Never mind—since this morning I have got over it.

ONE LADY (*to another*).

A betrothing, do you say?

ANOTHER LADY.

Yes, Hallerfeld declared himself at the ball this morning.

FIRST LADY.

For the aunt, or for the niece?

SECOND LADY.

For the niece, of course.

FIRST LADY.

Why, formerly he was paying his court to the aunt!

SECOND LADY.

Never believe it!

FIRST LADY.

Yes, it was the current report in town; the Countess has some reason to be mortified if he has revolted to her niece.

A GENTLEMAN (*presenting flowers*).

May I bring you a tribute of stolen goods?

[*The ladies take the flowers.*]

Enter HALLERFELD.

HALLERFELD.

The Countess not here yet!

GRÜNAU.

Not yet—but meantime 'tis well you have come, Baron; help me to raise your friend's spirits—he is quite in the blue devils to-day.

HALLERFELD.

Alfred!

COUNT.

Leave me alone: you are a very likely man to raise my spirits, who are yourself the cause of my ill-humour.

HALLERFELD.

I! how so?

COUNT.

But 'twas my own stupidity too—fool that I was! to draw you such a picture of the girl, such a portrait *à la Titian!*

HALLERFELD.

Of Ida?

COUNT.

Yes, I seem to have expended all my eloquence, only to make her interesting in your eyes.

HALLERFELD.

I hear you have proposed.

COUNT.

No, no, luckily; but I was on the brink of it. But it will be some time now before the devil tempts me so again.

HALLERFELD.

Alfred, believe in the word of an honest man ! I remain true to my first vows. I am not your rival ; I have no pretensions to the young lady. Love her—try to win her ! I shall be rejoiced if you succeed, and have the power to make her happy.

COUNT.

No, no, no ; my love for her is yet in the bud ; but I see there is no trifling with it. I might lose my heart utterly, wholly, and get the turn off at last ; for though I have all the vanity of an eligible *partie*, at the ball to-day my eyes were opened : as soon as you came, there was no notice for me : I found myself *planté là* !—and then I remembered how often she used to inquire about you :—no, no—many thanks ; but I quit the field at once and for ever—'tis wisest.

Enter the COUNTESS and IDA, in full dress.

COUNTESS (*curtsies to the company*).

I thank you all, my good friends, cordially, that you have acceded to my request, and have accepted my invitation for a second *reunion* to-day ; assured of your kindness, of your sympathy, I could not celebrate this happiest hour of my life more fitly than in your society.

FIRST LADY.

Explain yourself, dearest Werdenbach.

SECOND LADY.

I am really anxious——

GRÜNAU.

Now, thank heaven, we shall have it all out.

COUNTESS.

You look at me wonderingly; you wish to know what is the object of a festival so suddenly announced, yet splendid as time and means would allow? What will you think when I tell you that this is my betrothing-day?

FIRST LADY.

Your betrothing!

SECOND LADY.

YOURS, Emilie!

GRÜNAU (*eagerly to the Count*).

There, hear that! Was I right or not?

COUNT.

Astonishment!

COUNTESS.

I have been engaged for the last two years to the Baron von Hallerfeld. Family affairs have hitherto prevented me from making it known; but these obstacles are at length removed; and I am now proud and happy to present to you Baron Robert as my bridegroom.

HALLERFELD (*advancing*).

And he has vowed to render himself worthy of your choice while life is granted to him.

[*He kisses her hand respectfully, and all the company gaze on one another with astonishment.*]

COUNTESS (*looking round her*).

You seem surprised, my friends! You cannot conceive what could induce a staid old widow to become faithless to the memory of a beloved husband, for the sake of a young man scarce of age? Perhaps you silently condemn me, and accuse me of folly and precipitancy? Listen, then, to my justification, written two years ago, and left sealed in the hands of Baron von Hallerfeld. Robert, where is my letter?

HALLERFELD.

Here, madam.

COUNTESS.

The moment is arrived—open it, and read what it contains. It is important that my friends, and those who live under the same roof with me,* should understand me as I am.

HALLERFELD (*breaks the seal and reads*).

“When I told you that I loved you, Robert, I spoke the truth; I do love you—not, indeed, as you fancy, but with such love as a mother feels for a son.” (*He stops in agitation.*)

* *Meine Hauëgenossen* is the beautiful German expression.

COUNTESS.

Go on!

HALLERFELD (*continues*).

“Only that I might be enabled to fulfil my promise to your dying father, and watch over your youth;—only to prevent you from being betrayed by an absurd passion into folly and error, have I lent myself to a deception which has doubtless exposed me to misconstruction; but I do it willingly, thus to secure, as I hope, the happiness of your future life, and believing that those who may now condemn me will do me justice hereafter. When you read these lines, my work is finished: you require my guidance no longer, and gladly do I resign the title of your bride to the woman of your maturer choice.”

[He remains silent and with downcast eyes, and the rest express in different ways their wonder and admiration—a pause.]

COUNTESS.

Robert, you now know my real sentiments; have you nothing to say?

HALLERFELD.

Astonishment, admiration, leave me no power to speak. O how shall I ever prove my gratitude?

COUNTESS (*presenting Ida*).

By making my Ida happy!

HALLERFELD.

Ida !

IDA.

Me ! dearest aunt !

COUNTESS.

He is your husband. (*To Robert.*) I can never forget that you would have sacrificed your love to your gratitude—nor can I offer you a higher reward than in giving you a wife who has acted as Ida has done.

GRÜNAU.

Your hand, Countess ! (*He kisses it with respect.*) Your pardon for all known and all *unknown* offences. I say no more.

COUNT.

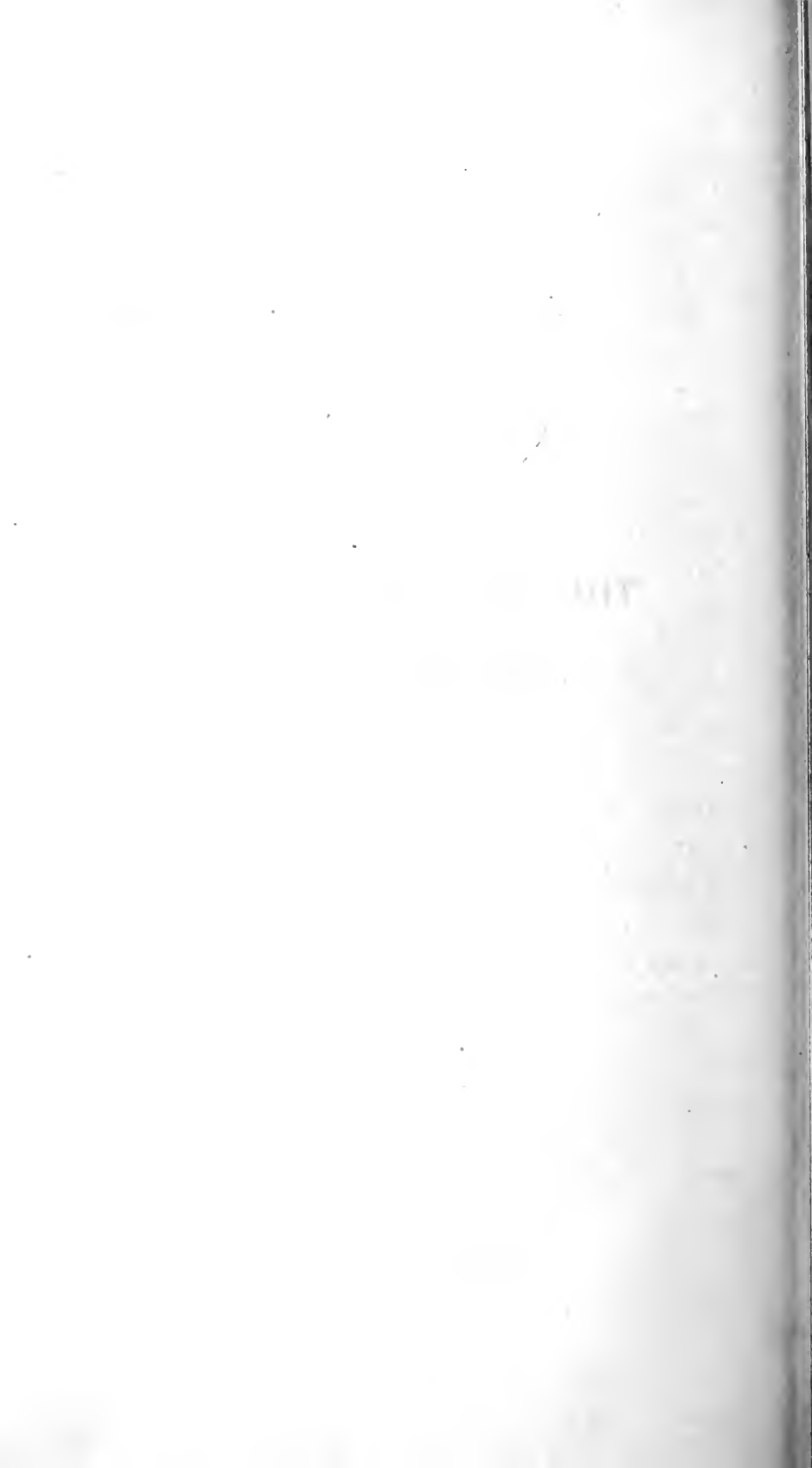
Robert has a fool's luck with a vengeance !

COUNTESS (*joins the hands of Ida and Hallerfeld, and pressing them in her own, looks up to heaven*).

Thus, my noble, my sainted friend, have I kept my word !

The Curtain falls.

THE END.

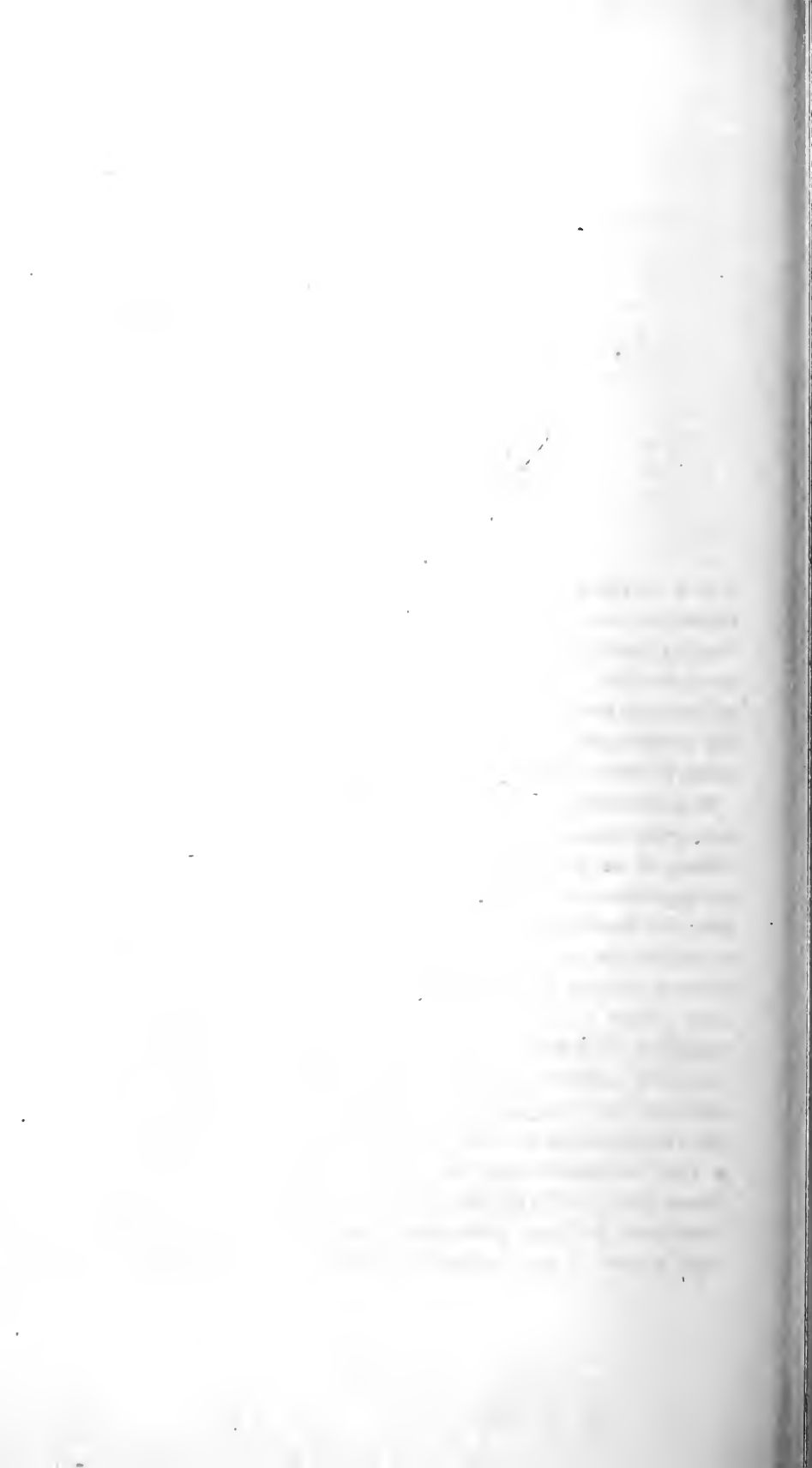


THE PRINCELY BRIDE.

(Die Fürstenbraut.)

A DRAMA.

IN FIVE ACTS.



REMARKS.

I WAS informed, when last in Germany, that the PRINCELY BRIDE had been, as an acting play, the least popular of all the Princess Amelia's early dramas. It is likely, notwithstanding, to prove one of the most striking and interesting to the English reader, not only from its intrinsic elegance, but as presenting to the life a *tableau* for which we could find no pendant in the social relations of this country ;—the court of a petty prince.

It is interesting, too, as being the earliest of the Princess Amelia's productions ; for though not acted publicly till 1835, it was written, as her Royal Highness informed me, some years before the appearance of " Falsehood and Truth." It seems quite natural that she should have taken her first subject from the sphere in which she moved. Never, perhaps, was a courtly group sketched off with such finished delicacy—such life-like truth—such perfect knowledge of and command over the materials employed. We have no other instance, I think, of the portrait of a princess delineated by the hand of a princess, and informed with sentiments and feelings drawn possibly from her own nature, or at least suggested by her own position. It is easy to conceive that one cause of this drama not being oftener performed, is the very truth of the picture it represents. I have been told that at the Burg Theatre at Vienna it was set aside, because it was not thought decorous to exhibit all the de-

tails of a modern court upon the stage ; and as almost all the theatres of Germany are attached to the court of some sovereign prince, and form a part of his state establishment, subject to his pleasure, the same feeling may have prevailed elsewhere ; but on this point, I do not pretend to speak *avec connaissance de fait*, I only mean to say, that “ ’tis pretty sure, and very probable.”

The English reader may imagine the Princess-Bride, the heroine of the drama, to be the daughter of one of the petty sovereigns of the German Confederation,—of some duke, or grand duke, or prince, with a territory perhaps half as large as Yorkshire, and a revenue of two or three hundred thousand a year. The daughter of such a prince would, in these days, receive an education very similar to that of our female aristocracy of the highest rank. She would be as carefully instructed in the usual accomplishments ; her intellect as well cultivated within the usual bounds ; and she would be even more watchfully excluded from all knowledge of her own nature and the nature of the wide, many-peopled world around her, with which she must never come into contact but under artificial or illusive circumstances. She would be taught that the first duties of her high station were an affable demeanour to her inferiors, and charity to the poor ; and while the whole tendency of the education given to her, and the circumstances of her position, would be to foster individual pride, the slightest assumption of it would be suppressed, because it would remain unprovoked by any competition of pretensions ; or checked, because it would be regarded as a fault of manner—unpopular, unprincess-like, unlady-like.

Thus shut out from all contact or acquaintanceship with the real social world by a cortège of Grandes-mâîtresses, governesses, and ladies of honour, she would become, if amiable, an object of common love, as well as of common care and reverential respect : no wind of heaven suffered to visit her face too roughly—

“ Far, far removed from want, from hope, from fear ;
From all that teaches brotherhood to man ;”

the sordid vices, the troublous passions, the abject pains of toiling, suffering humanity, undreamed of but as something to be relieved by drawing the strings of a silken purse, and speaking a few soft words in the softest voice ; and in the midst of all this obeisance and formal etiquette, and emblazonments of ancestral glory, living probably in some retired part of the paternal palace a most simple life, wearing a plain muslin gown, and accustomed to a most frugal table. Thus she would grow up accomplished, innocent, alas ! too—ignorant ; her tenderness concentrated on few objects, her real nature little known, to herself least of all. From such a girlhood, the young Englishwoman of high rank emerges at once into a world of realities, and falls under the influence of an order of things which completes the formation of her character one way or another. Not so with our young German Princess. The transition with her is from one dream-world into another ; she never quits the precincts of her father's court but to enter another and a similar circle of forms and ceremonies and representation, uniting all the unsubstantialness and glitter of a vision, with all the tedium and flatness of the flattest of worldly realities.

At the age of eighteen or twenty, a marriage is arranged for her with some neighbouring prince, whose alliance is considered advantageous. There is an exchange of embassies, proposals, pictures, letters, and the thing is settled. Marriages by proxy between parties who have never seen each other are less frequent than formerly, since it has become more the fashion for hereditary grand dukes and serene highnesses to travel about the world, and use at least a negative discretion in these matters : still they *do* take place. One of my best and kindest friends in Germany was a lady whose office it had been, in quality of Grande-maitresse, to see a young and beautiful princess espoused by proxy, and conduct her afterwards from her imperial home to the court of her husband some thousand miles off.

But to return to the princess whose destinies we are following in fancy—the princess of our drama. Brought up in retirement,

surrounded by sentimental women whose education has been as confined as her own, all the fervour of her German imagination—all the fresh feelings of her young heart only waiting to be kindled and called forth, she consents to the marriage arranged for her as a matter of course, and, as a matter of course, probably falls in love with the *idéal* she has formed of her unseen husband. On reaching her new home, she sees the man to whom she has been given, the very opposite of all she had pictured him in fancy ; or possibly finds him, as in the drama, devotedly attached to another, (and such was the fate of one of the loveliest and most accomplished among the princesses of Germany ;) happy, however, if, where she meets weakness or indifference, she find not unworthiness also. Then comes the awakening, reluctant and slow ; there is a wringing at the heart, a sharp, silent struggle, which, in the cherished pride of sex and of position, she hides from all, and with which, in her simplicity, she reproaches herself as with a crime hitherto unheard of and uncommitted ; and then, if a weak passionate woman, she becomes miserable or profligate through all the usual gradations, and dies of *ennui* ; but if, like the Princess of our drama, she be gifted, and high-minded, and high principled, she turns for consolation to pure and lofty sources : she patronises art, and does good as well as she may, —her best intentions and purposes still subject to practical error from the confined sphere and intense ignorance of humanity in which she has been educated : she takes a pride in gathering to her little court men distinguished in literature and science ; she even obtains quietly and silently the upper hand in the government ; for it is the inevitable law of God and nature, that where the *power* is, there will the *rule* be also, in spite of salique laws and any other laws.

Then she may have children, in whom she centres her pleasure and her pride ; in educating them, she in a manner new educates herself. She cultivates the promising talents of her eldest son, the hereditary prince, or sees him in silent despair become like his father, weak and dissipated. Her younger sons enter the military

service of one of the great powers, Prussia or Austria, become captains or colonels, wearing rich uniforms and half a dozen orders, and spending a small paternal allowance in addition to their pay. The daughters of the Princess-Bride are brought up as their mother was before them : sighing, she sees them one after another depart from her to fulfil a destiny similar to her own ; but without a suspicion that all this is not in the essential nature of things : and the once hopeful and feeling heart, and the once bright and aspiring mind, subdued at last to the element in which she moves, she goes through her state and court duties, holds her *grand et petit cercle* with habitual grace and suppressed *ennui*, plays piquet every night with the prince, sees every day the same faces, and does and says every day the same things ;—and so she dies, leaving behind her, perhaps, one favourite *Hofdame* to grieve for her, and the pensioners on her bounty to weep for her—or for their pensions,—and there an end ! I do not say that this is the fate of all princesses : far from it ; the picture might be infinitely varied ; but it is the possible fate of many, and it is that, I am afraid, which awaits the charming Princess of our drama. This delineation of sweetness, intellect, dignity, innocence ; of the pride of birth and high estate without mixture of vanity or selfishness ; of perfect elegance of deportment, with a certain tincture of stateliness in the manner and phraseology, is altogether most charming in conception and finished in effect. As finished in its way is the character, or rather *no* character, of the Prince. Whether the authoress really intended him to appear as contemptible as I am afraid the reader will think him, I am not quite sure. He is good-natured, and not vicious ; but weak in action and in passion, in doing and in suffering ; yielding to every impulse, every suggestion ; and if at length the good prevail over the bad,—the prudence and policy of Saldern over the selfish intrigues of Marwitz,—we feel that it is by mere chance and nothing else. In no one instance does he seem actuated by his own volition ; and he talks perpetually, as the weak always do, of *destiny*, the *voice of the heart*, the *force of circumstances*.

The incident of his breaking open the letter addressed to another, we are, I suppose, to regard as a permitted act of princely authority, sanctioned by custom ; or—what must we think of him ?

Among the petty independent sovereigns of Germany there are six bearing the title of *Gross-Herzog*, Grand Duke ; eight that of *Herzog*, Duke ; eleven that of *Fürst*, which we translate Prince, having no other equivalent. One is *Kurfürst*, Elector ; and one is *Landgraf*, Landgrave. The reigning princes and their immediate relations have the titles *Hoheit*, Highness, and *Durchlaucht*, Serene Highness. A grand duke is, I believe, *Königliche Hoheit*, Royal Highness. The immediate descendants of the grand-ducal families are in Germany properly styled Dukes and Duchesses ; the others, Princes and Princesses. The sons and daughters of the mediatised Princes (*Fürsten*), are also Princes and Princesses.

Graf, which we translate Count, is said to be derived from *Grau*, gray-haired, the title given to the elders among the German tribes. The titles *Freyherr* (Free-lord), and *Freyfrau*, or *Freyin*, (Free-lady), we translate Baron and Baroness, having no other equivalent ; but the Germans have both titles, with a distinction, that of *Freyherr* being more noble than that of *Baron*.

I have found it difficult to give appropriate English titles to the other dignified personages who figure in the drama ; for some we have no exact equivalent in our English court.

Oberst-Hofmeisterin, the highest female office near the person of a Princess, I have rendered by the French title *Grande-Maîtresse* as more familiar to the English ear. She unites the duties of Mistress of the Robes and first Lady of the Bedchamber in the English court ; the surveillance of the whole female establishment rests with her ; she resides in the palace, attends the princess on all state occasions, and through her all introductions and presentations are made : she has the title of Excellency.

Hofdame I translate by lady of honour, properly, *Dame de la Cour*. *Hof-Fräulein* is Maid of Honour.

Count Saldern, as *Ober-Kammerherr*, holds an office which corresponds, I believe, with that of first Lord of the Bed-cham-

ber and Groom of the Stole, in our court ; he has the title of Excellency.

I do not think we have any office corresponding exactly with that of *Hofmarschall* : it unites some of the duties of the Lord Chamberlain, with others of the Master of Horse, and Comptroller of the Household.

Marwitz is *Kammerherr*, Gentleman of the Prince's chamber, or, as we should say, Groom in Waiting.

A lady whom I knew in Germany, and who had been *Hofdame* in one of the German courts for many years of her life, expressed to me her unqualified surprise that, in this play, the Princess should arrive at her new capital attended by her own suite, and find no court already *monté* to receive her—that her *Grande-Maitresse* should be on the eve of departure, and yet that we do not hear of any one appointed to fill her place. This violation of court-etiquette we may excuse, as the introduction of many mute and supernumerary personages would much encumber the action of the piece, and we may, without much fatigue of the imagination, suppose their existence, though we neither see nor hear of them.

Another court lady, when speaking of this play, expressed herself perfectly scandalized by the incident in the third act, where Marwitz intrudes into the presence of the Princess without the intervention of the *Grande-Maitresse*. Such a violation of court etiquette seemed, in her eyes, to discredit the whole piece ; “ it was against all rules of probability and possibility, contrary to the nature of things, and how a Princess-authoress could be guilty of such an oversight was incomprehensible.”

* * * * *

I am here reminded of one more allusion which cannot well be explained within the compass of a marginal note. In the fourth act the Princess declares her intention of seeking a temporary refuge in the “ Convent of St. Mary on the Frontier,” (*Im Marienstifte an der Grenze*). Now this “ *Marienstift*,” the most decorous and dignified asylum to which, under such circumstances, a Prin-

cess could retreat, is not precisely what we understand by a convent. The *Damen-Stifter*, or endowments for unmarried noble ladies, are in Germany so numerous, they form such an important, influential, and interesting characteristic of their complicate social system, and vary so much in their immunities, laws, appanages, and number of inmates in each, that I must defer the detailed account I still intend to give of these institutions, not being yet in possession of all the requisite notes to do justice to the subject. It must suffice for the present to explain in general terms that these *Damenstifter*, or *lay-convents*, exist both in the Protestant and Catholic countries of Germany, and have been endowed from the lands of suppressed convents, or by princely munificence, or by the heads of great families. In these last named, the ladies admitted must be related within certain degrees to the family of the founder. In some instances the inmates are elected by a chapter, in others the nomination rests with the sovereign, or in the choice of the superior or abbess: in almost all, a descent of unstained nobility is a first requisite; in *all*, want of fortune and celibacy are necessary qualifications; but no vows are necessary, and no restraint is exercised, only when a lady marries she vacates her place and privileges to another; neither is constant residence within the walls of the institution required, but merely for some months or weeks every year, and at the chapters held for the arrangement of the domestic affairs of the community. Some *Stifter* are poorly, and some magnificently endowed, having extensive landed estates, which are managed by a *Stiftsverweser*, *Curator*, or *Rentmeister*, always a married man of good family and unimpeachable character. The superior or abbess is generally elected by the sisterhood, the sovereign having in most cases a vote, or, at least I believe, a *veto*. Sometimes, but rarely, the nomination rests with the sovereign alone. In some of the *Stifter* the Superior possesses considerable power and responsibility, in others scarce any; she has generally the title of *Höchst-würdige Frau*, (most honourable lady). There is also generally a prioress and a deaconess, (*Prieurin* and *Dechantin*). The other ladies are

styled *Stiftsdame*, (in French, *Chanoinesse*;) they vary in number from four or six to twenty and upwards. They frequently wear, when residing in their *Stift*, a particular costume, with a long white or black veil, and in full dress, on all occasions, a decoration or badge (*orden*) attached to a broad watered ribbon, blue, white, or crimson, suspended from the shoulder across the bosom or otherwise. It is very pretty, at a court ball in Germany, to see a number of noble girls thus decorated; one has at least the pleasant conviction that they will not be *obliged* to marry to secure a station in society—a refuge, a home; their order confers a certain dignity, besides an elegant maintenance; all of these, however, may not yet have arrived at the rank of *Stiftsdame*, they are perhaps only “Elect,”—*i.e.* have received from the abbess their decoration and *Expectanz Brief*, which gives them a right, in rotation, to the first vacancies which occur. It will sometimes happen that a noble lady may be placed on the list when ten years old, and not enter on her vocation till she is thirty, or more. In *Stifter*, where the ladies are elected, the vacancies are filled up as they occur.

It is easily conceivable that, in a country like Germany, where such strong social distinctions exist,—where alliances of unequal blood are still unfrequent,—where there is a numerous, a proud, and a poor nobility,—where the law of the *Majorât* centres the whole property of the family in the eldest son, leaving the younger sons and the daughters poor, and sometimes *very* poor, such institutions are most beneficial, and even necessary. I hope yet to receive accurate returns of the number of women attached to these endowed sisterhoods throughout Germany; they must amount to some hundreds.

I had several friends who were *Stiftsdamen*. One young friend of mine resided before her marriage in a splendid *Familien-Stift* in Bohemia, founded for sixteen noble ladies: she had her private apartments, consisting of three rooms, where she received her own visitors; her female attendant, and six hundred florins a year for pocket-money. There was an excellent table, a complete esta-

blishment of servants, including five liveried footmen, to attend the ladies when they walked out ; there was no care, and less restraint than in the domestic home.

One of the most celebrated of these institutions is the Stift at Fulda.

I have heard but of two or three *Stifter* in which nobility of birth was not a necessary qualification. One of these, the *Georgs-Stift*, at Hildesheim in Hanover, was founded by King George IV. in 1829, for twelve daughters of men who had served the state in civil offices, without distinction of birth or religion.



PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

THE PRINCE.

THE PRINCESS MATILDA.

COUNT VON SALDERN, *Formerly the Prince's
Tutor ; now Minister.*

BARON VON MARWITZ.

COUNTESS VON THALHEIM, *Grande Maîtresse to
the Princess.*

MATILDA VON WALLERBACH, *Maid of Honour to
the Princess.*

MAJOR VON SOLLAU, *The Prince's Aide-de-camp.*

A VALET-DE-CHAMBRE *of the Prince.*

A VALET-DE-CHAMBRE *of the Princess.*

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN *of the court*, PAGES, SENTINELS, &c.

THE PRINCELY BRIDE.

ACT I.

SCENE — *An Apartment in the Palace of the Prince.*

COUNT SALDERN (*alone, a letter in his hand*).

I cannot conceive what my friend Steinau means with his absurd scruples and exaggerated caution: or—may there not possibly be more in the whole affair than he chooses me to understand? He is not a man to trouble himself without good cause, yet this letter reads as if he were anxious to exculpate himself on some particular point, and it makes me uneasy. It was his interest to bring about this marriage, and I

never before knew him to be particularly scrupulous in the use of means to attain his end. If I had but known of this secret embassy of the Baron von Marwitz!—yet I should not be much wiser, perhaps. The Prince has just reached that age when he no longer needs a tutor, and has not yet learned the value of an honest counsellor: and, after all, what could Marwitz himself, cunning as he is, have had to tell, except that the Princess is beautiful and amiable? for such she is in truth, or the whole world speaks false. I trust yet that all will be well, and that good fortune has this once only taken the bye-path to visit us. It would, however, be advisable to give Marwitz a hint that he may hold his tongue at least. The imagination of a young man is more to be considered, sometimes, than his heart, for once wounded it is more difficult to heal.

As he is going out, he meets the PRINCE entering.

PRINCE (*in a rapid joyful tone*).

Did you hear, Saldern? the first cannon has been fired! She is now in the capital—in *my* capital—her own! O that I could now hurry to the gates, mingle unseen among the shouting multitude, and hail her with a thousand welcomes from the full overflowing heart!

COUNT.

Your Highness knows that age has not yet rendered me incapable of sympathising with youth;—I share your joy.

PRINCE.

To be forced to wait her arrival here! to be chained down by formalities in such a moment—how intolerable! how provoking! O hateful despotism of court etiquette, which poisons every joy of our life, and pursues us even to the tomb! (*Sound of cannon at a distance.*) Hark! (*Bells ringing merrily.*) The bells, too! she is approaching. O bear my thanks to heaven, ye pious messengers of joy!—never till now did I feel your full significance! we grow devout when we are happy!

COUNT.

We are more likely to remain both devout and happy when we have steered clear of the delusions of youth: and here your choice is justified both by your understanding and your heart. A beautiful, intelligent, and amiable woman will content the wishes of reason; while not even an angel from heaven could fulfil the wild expectations of youthful fancy. Your Highness has seen the portrait of the Princess, your august bride?

PRINCE.

My bride—my wife! she is so—bound to me for ever, and indissolubly mine! A portrait, say you? what care I for a portrait?

COUNT (*smiling*).

Your highness were not surely the first young Prince who had endeavoured to trace in the features of his betrothed bride the qualities on which he was to depend for happiness.

PRINCE.

Her lovely features are the mirror of a mind more lovely; but were she even the reverse of beautiful—these letters—(*taking out a pocket-book*)—I will show them to her to-day, and swear to her that ever since they have been in my possession, they have been here—next my heart.

COUNT (*taking breath as if relieved*).

Your Highness, then, has fallen in love with the letters?

PRINCE.

My excellent, my paternal friend! I am too happy to conceal anything from you. My marriage with the Princess Matilda was the wish of my late father—of my people—and yours, my friend! the feuds of two neighbouring states were to be healed by this union. The fame of

Matilda's beauty and virtue inclined me to consent and to unite my fate with hers; but the idea of a marriage without love is not inviting at twenty. I wished to see the Princess before I decided irrevocably.

COUNT (*breathless*).

Well!

PRINCE.

And I *have* seen her.

COUNT (*alarmed*).

Seen her! where? how?

PRINCE.

In the house of the Hofmarschall von Steinau. Why do you look at me so anxiously? Is it a great misfortune that for once a marriage between princes should not be such a mere prosaic affair? I had been informed that the Princess occasionally visited the wife of the Hofmarschall,* who had formerly been her lady of honour; and on this I formed my plan. I gave Marwitz instructions to request of the Hofmarschall to contrive that he should meet the Princess at his house. After a good deal of difficulty, Steinau complied with the wish of my ambassador, on the condition that the meeting should have the appearance of accident, and

* *Hofmarschall*, which I have left untranslated, is properly the Comptroller-general of the royal household.

that Marwitz should conduct himself as if wholly ignorant of the rank of the lady he was to meet. I was then at my hunting palace on the frontiers. A letter from Marwitz summoned me to the Duke's capital: and on the evening of the same day he introduced me at the house of the Hofmarschall under the name of Count von Holm. There, in the domestic circle of her friend, I beheld my Matilda; and, after two hours spent in delightful converse, I rode home through the darkness of the night, all heaven in my exulting heart.

COUNT.

And did your Highness never refer to this interview in any of your letters to the Princess?

PRINCE.

And have thus destroyed wilfully the sweetest of my pleasures?—for, my dear Count, you know as yet only the half of my happiness! Matilda—I would not breathe it to another—but Count Holm apparently did not displease her.

COUNT.

Your Highness presumes then——

PRINCE.

My dear Saldern, suppose that her remembrance of Count Holm should not be quite effaced from her heart, and that to-day she should find a self-reproved, unacknowledged in-

clination not only justified, but hallowed in the sight of heaven.

COUNT (*aside*).

I have hardly the courage to disturb a joy so pure, so true; and yet I must—I must!

PRINCE.

You are silent: what is there to displease you in all this? Do I not love *her*, whom it has become my duty to love?

Enter the BARON VON MARWITZ (*in haste*).

MARWITZ.

The carriage of the Princess has just driven into the palace court.

[*The shouts of the people are heard without.*

PRINCE.

I come, I come! Where are the rest of the gentlemen in waiting?

MARWITZ.

All assembled in the antechamber.

PRINCE.

Come, Count! Matilda! O, Matilda!

[*He is going.*

COUNT (*in the greatest anxiety*).

One word, your Highness!—a single word—

PRINCE.

Afterwards—at this moment I have no thought but for her. What blushes, what surprise, when

she—and I!—O was ever man born to such happiness!
[*He hurries out.*

COUNT.

Baron! what have you done? After him, bring him back! I dread a scene.

MARWITZ.

I do not understand you.

COUNT.

The Prince believes that he has already seen the Princess. The Homfarschall has played you false, or you are yourself guilty of the most unpardonable imprudence. The lady whom you met at Steinau's house was not the Princess.

MARWITZ (*in terror*).

Then I am undone!

COUNT.

And not you alone; the Prince, too—his innocent bride!

MARWITZ.

They are coming! what shall I do? Allow me at least to convince you—to explain——

COUNT.

We shall have time enough to explain afterwards.

Enter the MAJOR VON SOLLAU.

Hurrah!* she is here at last! our fair young

* Glück auf!

Princess!* If it had not been for the guards, I believe the people would have borne her in their arms up the steps of the palace. Never did I behold our capital in such a state of excitement and enthusiasm.

COUNT.

And the Prince ?

MAJOR.

The Prince! surprise and joy seemed to have deprived him both of thought and speech : when he gave his arm to her on alighting, he stood as if turned to stone—on my word, as pale as death ; and then she brings a charming maid of honour with her, a lovely sparkling brunette :—you'll see her presently—the Master of the Household† has given her his arm.

COUNT (*aside*).

Good heavens ! how is it all to end ?

MARWITZ (*aside to the Count*).

My lord, for pity tell me how did this fatal communication reach you ?

COUNT.

From the Hofmarschall himself !

MARWITZ.

Horrid—quite ! If you only knew how he

* The Major does not give her in this place the title of *Prinzessin*, but that of *Fürstin*, which expresses the sovereignty.

† *Obersthofmeister*. The “ first lord in waiting ” would better express the office.

deceived me—how he contrived to persuade me—left me no doubt, in short, that all was right ! But—but *I* am not responsible—I only obeyed the Prince's own command.

COUNT.

Be more composed—we are not alone !

MAJOR.

They are coming. Now, my lords, have you not some little curiosity ?

COUNT.

Curiosity ?—yes, by heaven !

[They stand aside. Then enter guards, officers, and ladies of the court ; then the Prince leading in the Princess, followed by the Countess von Thalheim, Matilda von Wallerbach, and attendants.]

PRINCE (*as if commanding himself, and speaking with effort*).

Your Highness may be assured that I think myself beyond measure fortunate to have the honour of introducing into my palace a lady so amiable, so universally beloved : my gratitude to his Highness, your illustrious father, can only end with my life.

PRINCESS.

These kind sentiments set my heart at ease, already touched by the manner in which I have been received in your city. Your people were

so enthusiastic!—and your Highness, methinks, must well deserve their love, or a stranger, who as yet has no claim to their good-will but the title of your bride, could hardly have met with such a cordial reception.

PRINCE.

I am glad my people have conducted themselves with the respect due to your Highness. (*Presenting the Count to her.*) My former tutor, now my grand chamberlain, Count von Saldern.*

PRINCESS.

I am happy to make the acquaintance of one whom I have so long held in respect. I come recommended to your kindness, my Lord Count, if you have received my father's letter.

COUNT (*bowing*).

Madam, his Highness was pleased to jest! —(*aside*)—and the jest, I fear, is likely to turn to earnest!

PRINCESS.

Your Highness will allow me to present to you the ladies of my court. My grande-maîtresse, the Countess von Thalheim.

* *Oberkämmerer* : “first lord of the bedchamber” would better express the office.

PRINCE.

Widow, I presume, of the master-of-horse,*
von Thalheim ?

COUNTESS (*curtsying*).

My late husband had the honour, I believe, of
being known to your Highness.

PRINCESS (*presenting her*).

The Lady Matilda von Wallerbach.

PRINCE (*starting as he sees her*).

Righteous heaven !

MATILDA (*aside*).

Whom do I see !

PRINCE.

What is the name of this lady ?

PRINCESS.

The young Baroness von Wallerbach : your
Highness, I believe, has never seen her before :
she is here for the first time.

MATILDA (*to the Countess in a low voice*).

And this gentleman is really the Prince ?

COUNTESS.

Do you not see—do you not hear that he is ?

MATILDA.

I was only struck by a resemblance—but
'twas nothing.

* *Oberjägermeister* : properly “chief huntsman.” It is one of
the highest offices in a German court.

PRINCE (*who has overheard her*).

Perhaps the lady may remember a certain Count von Holm, who had once the honour of being introduced to her by the Hofmarschall von Steinau?—he is said to resemble me.

MATILDA (*with embarrassment*).

A little—yes—certainly ; at the first glance—
(*to the Princess*)—your Highness may remember I spoke to you of Count Holm ?

PRINCE (*significantly*).

And he spoke to me of the Lady Matilda. I regret that he should be absent at this moment ; but 'tis possible he may yet appear ; meantime may I hope you have no intention of leaving us ?

MATILDA.

That depends on her Highness's pleasure.

PRINCESS.

My good Countess Thalheim, I fear, cannot be persuaded to stay with us ; but Lady Matilda will do me the favour to remain with me a few weeks, if your Highness approves.

PRINCE.

Most assuredly ; it will be a pleasure to me, as well as to Count Holm. Your Highness must be a little fatigued after your journey : will you allow me to conduct you to your own apartment ?
(*To Matilda in a low voice.*) Matilda von Wal-

lerbach—that is your name?—I have much to say to you of Count Holm!

PRINCESS.

Come, my dear Thalheim!

[She goes out, led by the Prince. The Countess, Lady Matilda, and the Major follow, and the rest disperse different ways. The Count and Marwitz are left alone.]

MARWITZ.

They are gone at last! I thought I never should have survived it! Now, my Lord Count, speak, for heaven's sake!

COUNT.

What do you want to know? You see too well how matters are!

MARWITZ.

What I have seen throws me into fresh perplexity; the pretty maid of honour who attends the Princess, she is the very person who——

COUNT.

Matilda von Wallerbach? Shall I read you the Hofmarschall's letter?

MARWITZ.

Do so, I beg! I am anxious to hear what he can say in his own defence.

COUNT *(takes out a letter and reads)*.

“The unbounded confidence which I place in

your Excellency's prudence and character induces me to communicate to you a circumstance which, without some previous explanation, may possibly make me appear in a false light to yourself and your court."

MARWITZ.

No explanation will prevent *that*, I fancy.

COUNT (*continues*).

"A few weeks since, Baron von Marwitz, chamberlain* in the service of your Prince, visited our court. He passed several evenings at my house, made particular inquiries respecting our Princess, and at length begged of me, as the Princess now and then visited my wife, then confined by indisposition, to present him to her Highness. Your Excellency will conceive how utterly impossible it was for me to consent to a request so contrary to all etiquette; and I told the Baron distinctly that the Duke, her father, would never forgive me if I should thus compromise his daughter."

MARWITZ.

True; so he said at first; but as I gave him to understand that I should consider my mission at an end—

COUNT.

Listen. (*Reads.*) "It became the more ne-

* *Kammerherr*, gentleman of the chamber.

cessary to excuse myself, when I learned that he had met the Baroness Matilda von Wallerbach in my wife's evening circle, and had mistaken her for the Princess. As, according to report, Baron Marwitz and Count Holm appear to have been secret envoys from your Prince, and as Matilda von Wallerbach, in spite of all my endeavours to the contrary, accompanies the Princess by her Highness's desire, I must depend on your Excellency's known wisdom to take proper means to silence those who are privy to this affair, and thus prevent all injurious misunderstandings between the two courts."

MARWITZ.

Unheard-of audacity! What do you say to it? He will not acknowledge that he knows of my secret mission, and he ends by throwing the whole blame on me!

COUNT.

So it appears. Did you ever speak to him plainly with regard to your mission?

MARWITZ.

Plainly?—no; that was contrary to my orders; but——

COUNT.

My dear Baron, a statesman never listens to a *but*. And now tell me, did Steinau inform you in so many words that the lady you met at his house was the Princess?

MARWITZ.

Plague on't! no, he did not absolutely tell me so; but if you only heard the half expressions, the hints, the signs he made me——

COUNT.

A hint, a sign, cannot be proved in a court of justice; and half words are only understood by those to whom they are addressed. Baron, you may have acted like a man of honour, I do not deny it, but the blame rests on you notwithstanding.

MARWITZ.

'Tis enough to drive any one distracted!

COUNT.

Let us endeavour to forget what is past and not to be recalled; and think how we can redeem the future. I will go immediately to the Prince's cabinet, wait his return, and be the first to encounter that terrible contest—the strife of reason and honour against youth, power, and passion.

[*He goes out.*]

MARWITZ.

Ay, you may go, and you may preach too, if you will—it won't do. As if we did not know the Prince! If it was about the building of a house, he would think he knew better than the mason;*

* This is a German phrase: Wenn es ein Haus zu baen galt, musste er Recht behalten gegen den Baumeister!

and will he listen to reason, and he over head and ears in love?—not he! The Hofmarschall Steinau has overreached me scandalously, and will laugh at me into the bargain; and in the whole affair I am certainly the most injured; and if I could only bring myself off with honour, I shouldn't much care about the rest—not I. To be sure, I pity the Princess; but, in the very worst case, she is still a Princess. As for the old Duke, he will fall into a passion, but he'll not declare war, I fancy.

Enter the PRINCE.

PRINCE.

'Tis well I find you here, Baron von Marwitz; can you conceive for what purpose they are playing this farce? There have I been seated this half hour between the supposed Princess and the supposed Lady Matilda, expecting at every moment to see them exchange characters, since I have confessed myself very intelligibly to be identical with the Count von Holm; but I wait in vain; each so fixedly, and with such self-possession, retained her disguise, that to end the painful, embarrassing scene at once, I took my leave, requesting permission to repeat my visit.

MARWITZ (*in the greatest embarrassment*).

Your Highness's pardon; but I did not quite understand——

PRINCE.

You have not seen the Princess, then?

MARWITZ.

The Princess? O yes—certainly; but your Highness spoke of a farce?

PRINCE.

If the Princess is here under the name of her own lady of honour?——

MARWITZ.

Does then your Highness think it?—hope it? O would to heaven it were so!

PRINCE.

Well, sir?

MARWITZ.

The Hofmarschall has betrayed us—has played us false—false! The farce is played out, and what your Highness sees, is—reality!

PRINCE (*turning pale*).

Then the object of my admiration—my love, was——

MARWITZ.

Matilda von Wallerbach.

PRINCE (*eagerly*).

How do you know that?

MARWITZ.

From a letter of the Hofmarschall to Count von Saldern.

PRINCE.

Woe to the Marshall if you speak truth—it shall be the worse for him and for others too! I am human, and may be deceived, but unrevenged—never!

MARWITZ.

I am innocent, my most gracious lord!

PRINCE.

We shall see, sir; that remains to be proved: meantime, even though you be no traitor, yet are you the most negligent and most clumsy of negociators, and you are henceforth dismissed from my service.

MARWITZ (*respectfully but impressively*).

Your Highness will permit me, on taking leave, to bequeath to my colleagues one piece of advice—to obey only the written commands of their Prince. I would give a great deal, had I followed this principle myself.

PRINCE.

Audacious too!—like all who feel they have no longer aught at stake! Leave me! (*Marwitz retires a few paces.*) And hark ye, sir! Write to your Baron von Steinau—tell him that since

he has introduced the Baroness Matilda to me as my bride, he must be silent, ay, and know how to silence his court, if I make her my wife.

MARWITZ.

Certainly.

PRINCE (*with increasing vehemence*).

I shall follow the impulse of my heart! Who has the right to censure my actions—who?

MARWITZ.

No one, my gracious lord.

PRINCE.

Matilda von Wallerbach loves me—I love her. Every private individual has the privilege of sharing his fate with the woman he loves; why is it denied to princes?

MARWITZ.

May I inform the Baroness of your Highness's sentiments towards her?

PRINCE.

You may so; but be prudent.

MARWITZ.

The Grand Chamberlain, Count Saldern, awaits your Highness in your cabinet.

PRINCE.

Good; I am glad to know that, for I will not see him now. Confess, Marwitz, that he intends to read me a lecture—ha? O that these moralists of sixty could but be twenty once more in

their lives!—they would not deal so hardly with us. Well, my philosopher must have patience;—I will take a turn in the open air.

[*He goes out.*

MARWITZ.

I am in a strange position. Is it advisable to encourage the Prince's passion? or shall I act in opposition to it? In that case, his Highness must put up with his affianced bride; Matilda von Wallerbach will be sent off; we shall be all left in peace and good will, and the Hofmarschall will laugh at me in his sleeve!—no, it shall not be! If, on the contrary, I take the beaten path in such matters, we may possibly have a hurricane; but Steinau will be disgraced, and I remain the Prince's favourite. The first suggestion is the best—I adhere to it; they shall know what it is to have made a fool of the Baron von Marwitz.

[*He goes out.*

END OF ACT I.

ACT II.

SCENE—*The Apartment of the Baroness Matilda.*

MATILDA and MAJOR VON SOLLAU seated.

MAJOR.

I am indeed most grateful for the honour your ladyship has done me in acknowledging me here at court. Travelling acquaintances are generally mere strangers the moment a lady steps out of the carriage.

MATILDA.

As our partners are the morning after a ball ; but we make exceptions in both cases.

MAJOR.

Then, at least, you do not confound me with the mass ?

MATILDA (*playfully*).

Did you not take most paternal care of me whenever we stopped to dine or sup?

MAJOR.

You jest, dear madam; and you are in the right, for it well becomes your beauty. Yet I came here for the sole purpose of speaking a few serious words with you.

MATILDA.

Serious?—you alarm me!

MAJOR.

I came to—to ask your advice.

MATILDA.

A gentleman? and ask advice from a lady? that certainly elevates you in my estimation, for it raises me in my own. Let me hear, then.

MAJOR.

I wish to learn of you what I shall do to become a happy man.

MATILDA.

Fancy yourself so: I know no better means.

MAJOR.

I doubt whether my fancy can reach so far.

MATILDA.

Nay, be not offended; I do not exactly know what your position may be; but I presume it depends on yourself to be happy; you are young,

rich, are esteemed in your profession, well looking—what would you more?

MAJOR (*significantly*).

You ask me?

MATILDA (*looking down*).

The question is natural, methinks.

MAJOR.

And can a woman, young and charming, conceive a happiness with which the heart has nothing to do?

MATILDA.

A man possessed of your advantages can hardly fail to please our sex.

MAJOR.

That is just what I was about to ask. Would it be a proof of self-conceit if I held it not impossible to win the real love of a noble maiden, who never, never should repent having united her lot with mine?

MATILDA.

Then to complete your happiness you want——

MAJOR (*with animation and emphasis*).

An amiable companion for life. Do you think I shall ever find such a one? Do you consider me as one with whom a woman might venture her happiness?

MATILDA.

No woman but would deem herself honoured

by your proposals, and few, I think, would reject them.

MAJOR.

Few! but some, you imagine;—and if among them were the only woman I could ever think of?

MATILDA.

You have then already made your choice?

MAJOR.

Suppose I had made it, and that the object of my love resembled in mind, and heart, and charms, the Lady Matilda,—do you believe that she would belong to the few you allude to?

MATILDA (*blushing*).

I think——

MAJOR (*seizing her hand*),

Not!

MATILDA (*in a low voice*).

I think not.

MAJOR (*kisses her hand*).

Victoria! I am now assured of all I wished to know.

MATILDA.

Major!

MAJOR (*listening*).

I hear steps—some *mal-apropos* visit, which will oblige me to leave you; but I carry with me a *no*, sweeter than the sweetest *yes* that ever blessed a lover's ear.

MATILDA.

We must speak farther,

MAJOR.

Farther—as much as you please; but not otherwise than you have spoken. Pray dismiss your visiter as soon as possible, for I will not promise to absent myself long.

[*He kisses her hand, and exit.*]

MATILDA.

He appears to be in earnest—to have serious intentions, and I—I am afraid I have gone too far, unless I can make up my mind to marry him. Marry! the thought frightens me—yet that must come at last. The Major is an estimable and an agreeable man; and a suitable marriage would release me at once from the painful position in which I stand with regard to the Prince—a position which threatens at once my peace and my good name.

Enter MARWITZ.

MARWITZ.

All alone, fairest lady?

MATILDA (*playfully*).

How do you know but that I am surrounded by spirits?

MARWITZ.

Cupids they must be.

MATILDA.

Cupids, then!—why not?—they were no bad company!

MARWITZ (*significantly*).

I know one who finds them but too intolerable.

MATILDA.

His own fault, then: Cupids are like charming children when properly kept in order; but the most misbehaved set of spoiled imps when once you give them the rein.

MARWITZ.

You think, then, that love depends on our own will?

MATILDA.

Surely: I should like to see who could force me to love *against* my will!

MARWITZ.

For all that, Cupid plays strange tricks with the human heart. I could mention one of my friends as a particular instance. Your ladyship may remember a young and handsome man who accompanied me on a visit to the Baroness Steinau? A certain Count von Holm?

MATILDA.

No, Baron von Marwitz, I know nothing of that person—at least I will not suffer him to be mentioned in my presence.

MARWITZ.

Your heart is perhaps engaged elsewhere?

MATILDA.

The state of my heart has nothing to do with the matter.

MARWITZ.

That Count von Holm entertains a serious passion for you is true, I can assure you.

MATILDA.

So much the worse.

MARWITZ.

Is it then so impossible that you should return his love?

MATILDA (*haughtily*).

For what do you take me, sir?

MARWITZ.

I see I must speak more plainly, or be misunderstood. You are now acquainted with the real position and character of the person who was presented to you as Count Holm?

MATILDA.

Yes—and therefore the more it becomes me to reject——

MARWITZ.

Pray do not interrupt me.

MATILDA.

I will hear no more!

MARWITZ.

The nuptials appointed for this evening *may* be omitted, and the marriage by proxy *may* be annulled.

MATILDA (*agitated*).

What do you mean? you frighten me!

MARWITZ.

I have just received the Prince's orders to countermand the ceremony.

MATILDA.

Good heavens! and our Duke?

MARWITZ.

Is referred to his Hofmarschall Steinau.

MATILDA.

And the Princess?

MARWITZ.

Can return home and tell them what she thinks of our court.

MATILDA.

Do you speak seriously?—no, it were too monstrous!—no, it is impossible!

MARWITZ.

Love disclaims the word!

MATILDA.

Such a breach of faith——

MARWITZ.

What breach of faith? and to whom?—your

Duke! who first presented to the Prince the Lady Matilda as his affianced bride, and now would force his own daughter on him in her stead?

MATILDA.

And did the Duke know of this affair?

MARWITZ.

Is the Hofmarschall mad, think you?—for mad he must be, to venture such a step without the knowledge of his sovereign. One word from your lips, and you attain that height which was in insolent mockery set before you, while those who would have deceived you are themselves the deceived.

MATILDA.

And the Prince is then really determined——

MARWITZ.

To lay his heart at your feet. Give me one word of encouragement for the Prince, and leave to us the care of your reputation. We will so arrange matters that the Princess shall be the first to break off: she will then return to her native country; you will accompany her, if you wish it; at a proper time you will find some excuse for resigning your place at court; the Prince will make a journey and meet the Lady Matilda somewhere by accident; your acquaintance will have the appearance of being quite new, and no one

will reproach the lovely maid of honour, if she seize on a jewel which her Princess cast away.

MATILDA.

If I could only believe you! you make me giddy—go! leave me!

MARWITZ.

But if I swear to you that all shall be as I say——

MATILDA.

There would still remain an insurmountable obstacle—my own conscience. Think you it is allowable to injure thus a Princess under whose protection I am placed?

MARWITZ.

So! conscientious scruples? but even these I can satisfy, by assuring you, that, independently of his love for you, the Prince has conceived such an aversion for the Princess, that he is resolved in every case to abandon the idea of these nuptials.

MATILDA (*hesitating.*)

Were I but convinced of that!

MARWITZ.

You may believe me: and, between ourselves, do you really think the Prince so much in the wrong? The Princess has little beauty, less talent; is cold in manner—the very antipodes, in short, of your fair self. Were it not better for

the Princess to purchase freedom by present and transient vexation, than to live through a whole life in the bonds of an unhappy marriage?

MATILDA.

Better—perhaps; but is it so in her own opinion? You know little, Baron von Marwitz, of the female heart; we women can endure much, very much, as long as our dignity is maintained in the eyes of the world.

MARWITZ.

It may be so—but we have nothing more to do with the Princess's wishes or opinions:—if you knew how fervently the Prince loves you, you would not send me hence without a word.

MATILDA.

What is it you require of me?

MARWITZ.

A simple yes or no;—without one or the other, I cannot leave you.

MATILDA.

And if I merely desire you to leave me?

MARWITZ.

Ha! I understand—I have my answer.

[He bows low—and goes towards the door.]

MATILDA.

Baron von Marwitz!

MARWITZ.

Lady!

MATILDA.

You are sure the separation of the Prince and Princess is not to be avoided?

MARWITZ.

As the Prince has already countermanded the nuptial ceremony, the decisive step is taken, and is not to be recalled.

MATILDA.

And he asks——

MARWITZ.

He only asks to be allowed to hope!—may he?

MATILDA.

Tell him—but only in case that his decision with regard to the Princess is not to be altered—that—that——

MARWITZ.

That your heart is not absolutely indifferent to him?

MATILDA.

O whither would you lead me?

MARWITZ.

To a throne!*

[He kisses her hand respectfully, and goes out.]

* The German idiom is not easily rendered. "Was machen Sie aus mir?"—"Eine Fürstin!"

MATILDA (*looks after him breathless—then sinks into a chair—after a pause.*)

What have I done?—placed my fair name, my peace, my well-being, in the power of this vain babbling coxcomb, who may hold me up to the sneers of the world? I must anticipate him, and by some decided step silence scandal. Yet if he has been really commanded by the Prince to speak to me on this subject? I were no woman if I did not see that the Prince loves me:—well, let things take their course; nothing is lost in that case. [*She goes out.*]

The scene changes to the apartment of the Princess.

THE PRINCESS—THE COUNTESS VON THALHEIM.

COUNTESS.

His Highness, methinks, is not very punctual to his appointment.

PRINCESS.

So much the better, dear Thalheim; the idea of this interview makes me anxious. I need a few minutes to collect myself.

COUNTESS.

Yet, during our journey, your Highness seemed so firm, so composed, so cheerful.

PRINCESS.

The letters of the Prince had inspired me with

a feeling of confidence and security. While at a distance, he was to me an acquaintance, a friend ; now that I have seen him, he is to me as a stranger. O there is a wide distinction between writing and speaking—the pen is often more eloquent than the tongue !

COUNTESS.

I lament, inexpressibly, that my family affairs oblige me to set off to-morrow ; is it still your Highness's intention to retain the Lady Matilda in your suite ?

PRINCESS (*repressing her emotion*).

That, I believe, was settled long ago.

COUNTESS.

Your Highness is aware that it was from regard to the old Baroness—Lady Matilda's aunt—that I recommended her to your service ; but I cannot say that she has fulfilled my expectations.

PRINCESS.

How so ? she appears to me an amiable girl—accomplished—lively——

COUNTESS.

And a coquette. Did she not contrive, in the course of our two days' journey, so to turn the head of poor Major von Sollau, that I doubt whether it will ever come round to its right place again ?

PRINCESS (*forcing a smile*).

Is it a crime to please?

COUNTESS.

She who aims at pleasing universally, will sometimes please where she ought not: as to the major, I think little about him, and she might lead half the city in triumph at her chariot wheels, for what I care, provided that she acted with integrity as regards your Highness.

PRINCESS.

I know too little of her as yet, to have any claim on her confidence.

COUNTESS.

I wish your Highness did not understand me; but I fear you only *will* not.

PRINCESS.

Hark! some one comes—see who it is, dear Countess!

COUNTESS.

The Prince! the Prince!—be but composed—all will be well: forget what I have said!—

[*The Princess looks up to heaven for a moment—then commanding herself, by a strong effort, she moves towards the door.*]

Enter the PRINCE; he bows with a mixture of ill-humour and embarrassment, and, after a pause, speaks in a cold distant tone.

PRINCE.

I hope your Highness has recovered the fatigue of your journey?

PRINCESS.

We travelled both days such easy stages, that, in truth, I hardly need repose.

[She takes a chair—the Prince, on a sign from her, takes another, and the Countess von Thalheim seats herself at some little distance.]

PRINCE (*after a pause*).

I trust you left the duke, your illustrious father, in good health?

PRINCESS.

Quite well; a little sad, 'tis true; at his age, partings are hard to bear.

PRINCE.

Nor, methinks, could it have been indifferent to your Highness to be separated from a family so beloved and so much attached to you.

PRINCESS.

Were that possible, I should indeed be unworthy of your esteem.

PRINCE.

It must be confessed that the customs of society are particularly tyrannical with respect to the daughters of princes: it has been rendered impossible for you to follow the highest vocation of your sex, without tearing asunder the tenderest bonds of your childhood.

PRINCESS.

Self-denial is the peculiar virtue of woman; and it seems intended that in this also we should show an example to the rest of our sex.

PRINCE.

It is requiring far too much, methinks; for what is offered to you in return for kindred, friends, and country? A man who does not know you—and who is to you unknown!

PRINCESS.

During my journey hither, I read your letters over again and again: they were dictated, I thought, by a noble and a feeling heart. To such a one my father confided my fate—to such a one I believed I might myself confide it. If my appearance does not equal the portrait your imagination had formed of me, I am tranquillised by the reflection that, at least, my character and my heart have been made known to you, as they really are. If there is anything in my deportment you would wish otherwise, I hope you will

tell me so freely. You shall be henceforth my instructor, my best friend—my only defender, counsellor, comforter, in this foreign land ! and if the first impression has somewhat disturbed the exalted and perhaps poetical idea you had formed of your unseen bride—yet may I not hope that a calmer, and therefore a more constant affection, may in time unite us for ever ?

PRINCE (*with emotion*).

I do not merit so much goodness ! (*aside*)—In truth, a rare creature !*

PRINCESS.

I am now orphaned—homeless—and must look to you for my all of earthly happiness : the command of a father banished me from the circle of my home, and sent me to you, alone, a timid, unlessoned girl ; but I obeyed with confidence, even while I looked back with regret on all I left behind : for you had invited me with tenderest words, which gave me the promise of as tender a heart. To that heart I will trust—much—much more than to the flatteries of a bridegroom. You will fulfil your vows, and not render for ever miserable the being, who, in accordance with your own wish, has forsaken all she possessed for your sake.

PRINCE (*embarrassed, yet with softness*).

Miserable !—you ?—do you then believe me

* Ein seltenes weibliches Wesen !

capable?—forgive me, Princess, if your first reception—if you knew all——

PRINCESS.

Knew what? explain yourself.

PRINCE.

You are displeased ; you blame me in your heart, and think me unkind—insensible——

PRINCESS.

Why so ? because I find you true?—because at our first meeting you laid aside all those common places of gallantry with which the heart has nothing to do ?

PRINCE.

You prize truth, then ?

PRINCESS.

Above all things I prize it !

PRINCE (*much agitated*).

Would I could prevail on myself — perhaps you would be of the same opinion in the end : at least it shall be entirely left to your own decision. My esteem, my respect, my admiration, you cannot for a moment doubt—— (*stops abruptly.*)

PRINCESS.

Speak on, I entreat !

PRINCE.

Yes ;—what was it I was going to say ? I have forgotten—nothing of any importance, for the

present. Your Highness will excuse me. I regret I must take my leave—my minister expects me in my cabinet. I shall have the honour of waiting on your Highness to conduct you to dinner.

[He kisses her hand—goes to the door, and meets Matilda coming in. He bows to her in visible confusion, and goes out. The Princess stands looking after him in silence.]

COUNTESS.

Very extraordinary! And pray what brings you here, Lady Matilda?

MATILDA.

My visit was not to your excellency. I wished to speak to the Princess.

PRINCESS.

In what can I serve you?

MATILDA.

Your Highness had the condescension to take me into your service for an indefinite period—

PRINCESS.

Yes—and I think in that we were agreed.

MATILDA.

So much the more painful do I feel it now, to be obliged to entreat my dismissal.*

* *Dismission* does not exactly express the meaning of *Entlassung*, which is the courtly phrase on these occasions for permission to depart or resign.

PRINCESS.

Your dismissal? what has caused this sudden change?

MATILDA.

May it please your Highness, a letter from my aunt, which I have just received.

PRINCESS.

Where is this letter? may I be allowed to look at it?

MATILDA (*embarrassed*).

I left it in my room, and it contains, besides, only family affairs——

PRINCESS.

Which I have no desire whatever to know.

COUNTESS.

If your Highness thinks proper, I hope the Lady Matilda will accept a seat in my carriage. She may thus commence her journey homewards to-morrow morning.

MATILDA.

To-morrow! I am not prepared——

COUNTESS.

O never mind your preparations! I will send you my femme-de-chambre, and will help you myself, if need be.

PRINCESS (*looking at Matilda affectionately*).

Matilda! (*Aside.*) I guess the truth—she loves him! she would fly from danger, and I dare not

even attempt to detain her. (*Aloud.*) Your society in this new country had been more than ever precious to me; but since duty recalls you, I will not be the cause of your disobeying its command. You will accept the Countess's offer, and take with you my esteem and my friendship. [*She embraces Matilda, and goes out.*

COUNTESS.

To-morrow morning punctually at eight—and you shall have the best place in my landau.

MATILDA.

The Princess seems in infinite haste to dismiss her suite,—or has my request offended her, that she has been so prompt in granting it? When I mentioned my aunt's letter, I did not mean to say that my family could not wait my return for another week.

COUNTESS.

And are you sure in a week hence to find such another opportunity of travelling under the protection becoming your age and rank? The Princess is good—too good! but she can see sometimes what she would rather not see. Go, my dear Lady Matilda—be ready by to-morrow. Depend upon me for a pleasant travelling companion. Your request to return home was, I do believe, heaven-inspired!

[*She goes out.*

MATILDA.

Dismissed ! at the first word—without even the common civilities !—turned out of doors as if I were a criminal ! The Princess must think me uncommonly magnanimous if, after such treatment, she depends on my consideration for her—or does she think herself so sure of her position ? Marwitz has not sent, and the Prince, as he passed, had scarcely courage to salute me. But let things be as they may, I will not go back with Countess Thalheim. Would not every one suspect there must be some cause of reproach against me, when they see me sent home after five days' absence ? I see I have rushed into a dilemma—from it I shall find it difficult to extricate myself. [*Exit.*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE—*A state-room in the Princess's suite of apartments.*

Enter the PRINCE—then a VALET DE CHAMBRE.

PRINCE (*calling*).

No one in the anteroom !

VALET DE CHAMBRE (*entering*).

Your Highness's commands ?

PRINCE.

Is the Princess in her chamber ?

VALET DE CHAMBRE.

Her Highness has just stepped out on the terrace, but I will immediately announce to the Grande Maîtresse—

PRINCE.

It is of no consequence : do not disturb her—I will wait. [*The Valet de Chambre goes out.*]

PRINCE (*walks thoughtfully to and fro — then speaks*).

I felt so resolved when I left my room, and, now I am on the spot, I feel my courage grow less and less every moment. (*He looks at his watch.*) Three o'clock : only five hours before the time appointed for the ceremony ! I can delay no longer. Poor Matilda ! her confession to Marwitz was not necessary to make me sure of her heart. And even if it were right and honourable to sacrifice my own feelings to political views, it is not allowable to outrage hers. (*He opens a window and looks out—after a pause.*) She comes not yet ! I think that if I placed the affair before her in its true light, and appealed to her magnanimity, we might possibly agree upon a means to secure her dignity on all important points : joyfully would I subscribe to any conditions to preserve her peace, her honour ! Courage ! in one hour hence all is settled ! but when it is so—shall I feel myself as happy as I once hoped to be ?

[*He leans against the window, lost in thought.*
Enter the COUNT, unseen by the Prince.]

COUNT (*aside*).

The Prince and his Marwitz lose no time: the nuptials already countermanded!—I hope it will not reach the public ear. There he stands: O unblest power of passion! How is he now tormenting his brain, tasking every faculty of thought to find means to rid himself of the jewel in his possession, and exchange it for the counterfeit stone! (*Aloud.*) Pardon, your Highness——

PRINCE (*starting*).

Who is there? You, my dear Count? You sought me this morning, I hear; tell me quick what is your business with me; for I am at this moment waiting the arrival of the Princess.

COUNT.

Of the Princess?

PRINCE.

The Princess; I have to speak to her on matters of the deepest importance.

COUNT (*anxiously*).

Your Highness——

PRINCE.

I esteem, I revere her, and will act in all things as a man of honour—that I swear to you! but in what concerns my own feelings I will listen to no one; and those that think to persuade me, will lose both time and trouble.

COUNT.

I merely came to ask your Highness whether the court is to assemble this evening in the grand saloon, or here?

PRINCE.

Time enough for that, my dear Count.

COUNT.

I would not willingly trouble your Highness again about such a trifle, and I am beset by inquirers——

PRINCE.

Then tell them their appearance is dispensed with; that the intended ceremony will not take place—at least not to-day.

COUNT.

Impossible! Does your Highness consider the effect which the postponement of such an important ceremony will produce on the public mind?

PRINCE.

Neither is it my intention that the matter should be *only* postponed. Do you understand me? Now you know all; and I beg of you, as you value my friendship, not a word more on the subject.

COUNT (*after a pause*).

Does the Princess know of your determination?

PRINCE.

Not yet ; she shall be made acquainted with it immediately. I hope to find her more reasonably acquiescent than my Mentor.

COUNT.

More indulgent, more forbearing,—'tis very possible ; a truly noble woman may be persuaded to the sacrifice of her own dearest interests, rather than wrong the confidence even of a stranger.

PRINCE.

If I am divorced from the Princess, it shall be so arranged that she will lose nothing in the public estimation : the blame will rest on me alone.

COUNT (*coldly*).

Allow me to observe that your Highness is not the best judge in such an affair : it can do you little harm ; the public censure and wonder are exhausted in a few days, and in a few weeks you will be again the all-be-praised and honoured sovereign : even to-day's breach of faith will be remembered only to be excused, while an inefaceable blot is attached to the name of your innocent and transiently-pitied bride, for ever !

PRINCE.

But if she acknowledges herself——

COUNT.

What has she to acknowledge?—that, contrary to her father's will, she has resisted this marriage? or that she finds herself under the necessity of giving place to one deemed more worthy? In the first case, she will be censured universally; in the second, she will be the object of a sort of compassion more degrading to a woman—more difficult to bear, than censure itself.

PRINCE.

We may find a middle course: I have a brother——

COUNT.

A youth of seventeen!

PRINCE.

Leave me, Count! I have every confidence in you; but in the position in which I am now placed, I can take counsel of myself alone. The affair can no longer be placed on the former footing. I have countermanded the ceremony, and have thus given a public demonstration of my feelings and intentions. Say no more!

COUNT.

Your Highness need not fear me.

[*He goes out.*]

PRINCE.

This, then, is the day to which I looked forward with such joyful anticipations. It has in-

deed held its promise to me in one respect ; I have found her whom I love ; I have the power to make her mine ; but my peace is not the less destroyed for ever. My heart whispers that, whichever way I decide, there is no happiness for me—none !

Enter MATILDA.

PRINCE (*aside on seeing her*).

Matilda ! Is her appearance the reply to that question which mine own heart dared not answer ?

[*Matilda curtsies, and passes on to the door of the Princess's room.*

Lady Matilda ?

MATILDA (*hurriedly, and then passing on*).

Your Highness will excuse me !

PRINCE.

Why seek to avoid me ?

MATILDA.

And if—if—have I not reason ? The transient notice with which your Highness has been pleased to honour me, is like to cost me but too dear !

PRINCE.

How so ? Has any one here dared to offend you ?

MATILDA.

An insignificant person like myself is not offended, but crushed at once. What signifies it

to a princess whether Matilda von Wallerbach be esteemed by the world, or held up to the world's scorn? Your Highness will allow me to take my leave at once—(*curtsying*).

PRINCE.

What am I to understand by this?

MATILDA.

Has your Highness any commands to our court? I set off to-morrow with the Countess von Thalheim.

PRINCE.

To-morrow?—impossible!—it must not be—it will give occasion to remarks—

MATILDA.

I must—I am so commanded!

PRINCE.

Commanded?—by whom?—by the Princess?

MATILDA.

I am under her protection, and would, in obedience to her wish, go anywhere without a murmur, if my reputation were not endangered by a sentence of banishment—so abrupt—so inexplicable: I should have thought my conduct since my arrival here merited more consideration.

PRINCE.

With what do they presume to reproach you?

MATILDA.

With nothing; and in the eyes of those who

bear me ill will, that is worse, perhaps, than anything more definite. Ah! did princes know what injury may be done to a poor, unsuspecting girl by merely a glance—a smile—an expression of kindness—they would keep better guard over their very looks. But pardon me, I do not upbraid your Highness—farewell! May you be happy!—(*she takes out her handkerchief.*)

PRINCE.

And did you not appeal against this injustice?

MATILDA.

I wished to venture some remonstrance, but could not obtain a hearing.

PRINCE.

Abominable!

MATILDA.

The Princess, after my dismissal, retired before I could think of a reply, and left the Grande Maîtresse to receive my answer.

PRINCE (*aside*).

There, Saldern, my wise Mentor! There's the gentle; the magnanimous Princess for you, who would rather trample another's happiness under her feet, than allow the world to suppose that another could be preferred before her! O, it is an enduring truth—the voice of the heart is the voice of heaven. Have you spoken with Marwitz?

MATILDA.

Did your Highness know then?—alas! I fear that this unfortunate interview is the real cause of all that has since befallen me.

PRINCE.

I shall take good care to secure you from all further annoyance: the time, I trust, is not far distant when I shall be allowed to explain myself, without offending either duty or form.

MATILDA.

Your Highness!

PRINCE (*seizes her hand*).

Rest assured of one thing—

MATILDA (*breaking from him*).

Some one approaches—it is the Princess!—
in pity let me go! [*She hurries out*]

The PRINCESS, entering, speaks to an attendant, to whom she gives a bonnet she held in her hand.

PRINCESS.

Say nothing to the Countess: I will not have her disturbed from her siesta. (*Seeing the Prince.*) You here, my dear Prince? I have not kept you waiting, I hope; I should regret—

PRINCE (*stiffly*).

Your Highness is too condescending. I can assure you I have not found the time long—not

in the least; for I have heard much in the interval that is both new and surprising, and, among other things, one piece of information, of which I must beg some explanation from your Highness.

PRINCESS.

From me?

PRINCE.

It is said that the young Baroness von Walterbach is to leave us to-morrow?

PRINCESS.

Possibly——

PRINCE.

Possibly?—you do not know of it then? and yet it is said to be by your own command.

PRINCESS.

With my consent, at least.

PRINCE.

To the prejudice, not less than the deep regret, of that young lady?

PRINCESS.

On the contrary, it is the young lady's own wish and request.

PRINCE (*drily*).

Indeed!—your Highness must excuse me if I entertain some doubts.

PRINCESS.

I have spoken to the Lady Matilda myself.

PRINCE.

You spoke to her?—without any attempt to detain her—without explaining to her the ambiguous light in which so rash a step would place her in the eyes of the world? Pardon me, your Highness assured me this morning that you prized sincerity above all things, and I cannot deny that such conduct towards the young lady surprises me.

PRINCESS.

I beg your Highness will leave to a woman the guardianship of a woman's fair fame: we are the best judges in such cases.

PRINCE.

I suspect there are certain circumstances in which the fate of one woman can hardly be trusted with safety in the hands of another.

PRINCESS.

It may be so; but I at least know of none.

PRINCE.

You have been prejudiced against this young lady.

PRINCESS.

I do not understand your Highness.

PRINCE.

Then I must take the liberty of saying, that I wish to have a stranger who visits my court treated with due respect.

PRINCESS.

I am most sensible of your consideration for my countrywoman.

PRINCE.

And that I cannot allow, that, on the very day of her arrival, the door of my palace should be closed against her.

PRINCESS.

Your Highness is so far right: it is *not* well; and I had fixed Matilda's departure for to-morrow, merely because, for a young woman of her rank in society, I thought my Grande-maîtressé the most suitable chaperone. I have since understood that the wife of our ambassador will return home in about a week, on a visit to her relations, and I have left it in Lady Matilda's own choice to go with her, or to go to-morrow: she will find my note in her room.

PRINCE (*with increasing anger*).

Sent off at one moment—detained the next! I see the young lady is no favourite; but it shall depend on herself how long she will endure such treatment, and the moment she chooses to be released from this dependence——

PRINCESS.

She will not choose it: and if she would, she *cannot*. Matilda was confided to me by her relations. I have tacitly pledged myself to restore

her to her home, unspotted in name, and uncorrupted in heart; and this duty I will fulfil, though it should cost me my peace—my happiness—my life! [She goes out

PRINCE (*looks after her—a pause*).

I know not how she contrives it; but thus does she ever find means to silence me! I was in the very humour to let her know my mind—and now the moment is past. Psha! Marwitz is in the anteroom: I will leave it to him to make an end. [Exit.

SCENE—*The Princess's private Apartment.*

Enter the PRINCESS, pale and agitated.

PRINCESS.

How was it all? what has happened? and where shall I ever find the fortitude to endure this cruel position? Merciful Heaven! and this is the man on whom I had depended for peace and happiness—who vowed to make me forget, for his sake, parents, friends, and fatherland? What has become of that noble heart which I fancied I traced in all his letters? O my poor father! did you but know to what you have exposed your daughter!—she who would so willingly have spent her days by your side! O may you never know it! I will arm myself in strength and patience;—I will fulfil my duty, be it ever so painful: there will come a day of retribution!

Enter a VALET-DE-CHAMBRE.

VALET-DE-CHAMBRE.

May it please your Highness, the Baron von Marwitz.

PRINCESS (*starts in surprise, but immediately commands herself*).

Show him in. [*Exit VALET-DE-CHAMBRE.*

PRINCESS.

Marwitz?—at such a moment?

MARWITZ (*appears at the door*).

Will your Highness permit me?

PRINCESS (*with dignity*).

You may approach, Baron von Marwitz.

MARWITZ (*aside*).

What shall I say? It were best to appeal to sentiment and magnanimity—that is sure to take effect with women. (*Aloud.*) Your Highness will, I hope, pardon me for thus appearing in your presence, without having first begged an audience through the usual forms? but everything depended on my finding your Highness alone!

PRINCESS.

What is your pleasure, sir?

MARWITZ.

I came to entreat your Highness's pity for a sick man.

PRINCESS.

A sick man !

MARWITZ.

Whom it depends on your Highness alone to restore to health.

PRINCESS.

You must speak more plainly, sir, if you wish me to understand you.

MARWITZ.

Your Highness will, I fear, accuse me of unpardonable presumption, if I dare to touch upon a point on which it becomes me rather to observe a respectful silence ; but attachment to my Prince——

PRINCESS (*quickly*).

The Prince sent you hither ?

MARWITZ.

Not exactly : it was rather his despairing looks which sent me in search of his physician.

PRINCESS.

A physician called in without his own consent were hardly welcome, methinks.

MARWITZ.

But if it were under the form of a gracious and noble lady ?

PRINCESS.

You may mean well, Baron von Marwitz ; but

I will learn the Prince's secrets from no lips but his own. *[She turns to leave the room.]*

MARWITZ.

Stay, Princess, I beseech you!—for your own—for the Prince's sake! You know not what secret—alas! that you thus force me to speak out what I would have left you to guess. The Prince acknowledges your merit, admires your attractions; but an unhappy mistake—what shall I say?—the treachery of a false friend—has betrayed his heart to the keeping of another; he loves, in short, with a passion he finds it utterly impossible to resist.

PRINCESS.

That, Baron von Marwitz, is what I will believe of no human being.

MARWITZ.

Your Highness thinks even as my lord the Prince. He, too, thinks that every human being can control his inclinations, though it be at the expense of all his earthly happiness. *(Pauses.)* Yet can a feeling, a high-souled Princess demand such a sacrifice? Your Highness afflicts him.

PRINCESS.

Myself not less.

MARWITZ.

And you will, notwithstanding——

PRINCESS.

I will share his fate, be it happy or unhappy, for so I have vowed to do.

MARWITZ.

Indeed !

PRINCESS.

Do you forget, sir, that I am his wife ?

MARWITZ.

Hem !—the Prince thinks that many objections exist——

PRINCESS.

I know of none which can allow me to consider myself as free. The Prince may act as he will—he has power on his side. I stand here for my rights, and will maintain the position in which I am placed as long as I can with honour. I know that there are a thousand means——but let them be tried ;—they will find me resolved and prepared. You may leave us, sir !*

MARWITZ.

I have the honour most respectfully to take my leave. Your Highness will act as you think proper ; meantime I humbly remind you that the ceremony for this evening is countermanded, and that the marriage by proxy will not be the first of that kind which has been declared null and void.

* “ *Sie sind entlassen*,” “you are dismissed,” is the royal phrase in Germany.

PRINCESS.

You may leave us, sir ! [*Exit.*

MARWITZ (*looking after her*).

The devil! She will listen to nothing! but she must—ay, it has come to that—*she must* listen to reason. I can have no princess reign here, against whom I have ventured so far. She or I—it has come to that. The Prince shall send her, by me, his parting compliments. Quick to him, before Saldern has time to commence operations against me. [*Exit.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE—*The Prince's Cabinet.*

PRINCE (*alone ; he walks up and down restlessly—
then looks at the clock.*)

PRINCE.

Marwitz must be here immediately. Even at this moment I am, perhaps, a free man. Free!—that sounds well, particularly when we love ; and yet, when I consider, it is no slight sacrifice which I make to this pretty, lively maid of honour. When I look back upon the scene of to-day—and truly I cannot think of it without a feeling of shame—with what gentleness—with what dignity she looked, spoke, moved, and still found the means to spare *me* without compromis-

ing herself! I must needs confess it—this Princess is a rare creature.

Enter MARWITZ.

MARWITZ.

My gracious lord!

PRINCE.

Marwitz at last! Tell me in one word that you have succeeded—that all is over—for this suspense is past endurance.

MARWITZ.

I have tried every means in my power to move her Highness.

PRINCE.

Well!

MARWITZ.

All in vain!

PRINCE.

How?

MARWITZ.

Her Highness seems to have made up her mind to listen to nothing which she does not desire to hear.

PRINCE.

But surely you told her——

MARWITZ.

I told her all. I spoke of your Highness's

sufferings—I touched upon the magnanimity we all expected from a female heart.—

PRINCE.

And she?—

MARWITZ.

Answered me with scraps of moral philosophy! —talked a vast deal about the duties imposed on her, and which she was resolved to fulfil. And when I most respectfully gave her to understand that your Highness had countermanded the nuptials for this evening, and consequently had decided at all hazards on following the impulse of your heart, she walked out of the room and left me *planté là*!

PRINCE.

You must have made some cursed blunder!

MARWITZ.

Let your Highness try what another can do.

PRINCE.

It seems, then, that we are just where we were this morning?

MARWITZ.

And it wants but two hours to the time appointed for the ceremony.

PRINCE.

Well—'tis the decree of fate. Heaven knows that it would scarcely cost me more to resist my inclinations than to follow them.

MARWITZ.

There remains an expedient by which we should attain our object at once. A few lines from your Highness to the Princess would at once settle the affair.

PRINCE.

Write to her? I see it—excellent! and thus all is decided in two minutes. (*He seizes a pen.*) And yet, Marwitz, when I reflect——

MARWITZ.

Ah! I understand! how could I be so blind? You are in the right, my gracious lord—as Lady Matilda said herself——

PRINCE.

What did Lady Matilda say?

MARWITZ.

O she! she weeps, poor young lady—naturally. It seems she had set her heart on her Count von Holm, and cannot, of course, understand that he is lost to her for ever, merely because he is metamorphosed into a Prince: and if there remained a single doubt on her mind, Count von Saldern has removed it: I saw him go in to her just now.

PRINCE.

Saldern!

MARWITZ.

He has been for this last hour assuring every

one whom he meets, that he has settled everything between the Princess and your Highness, and that, owing to his representations, the Baroness von Wallenbach had been dismissed.

PRINCE.

He will find himself mistaken, I imagine!

[He begins to write, but hurriedly—scratches out—writes again, and at length tears the sheet of paper, and takes another. Marwitz retires to the window, and stands watching him.]

MARWITZ (*aside*).

That last stroke told, but I don't feel sure of him yet; would it were signed and sealed!

PRINCE (*aside*).

I cannot retreat; the affair has become too public—and—and do I, after all, *wish* to go back? (*Aloud.*) Hark ye, Marwitz, as to what you say of Saldern, I don't believe one word of it.

MARWITZ.

As your Highness pleases. It is a thing of no consequence, one way or the other.

PRINCE (*aside*).

It must—it must be done! my very esteem and respect for the Princess drive me to it. Shall I wait till she is dressed for the ceremony, and all the court assembled?

MARWITZ (*aloud*).

It is now striking six.

PRINCE.

It is as if I could not find words in the language to express my thoughts. (*He writes a few lines, then breaks the pen, and flings it from him.*)

A vile pen !

[*He opens a pocketbook, takes a penknife from it, and mends a pen.*

MARWITZ (*at the window*).

I think we shall have rain, your Highness !

PRINCE.

Silence !

[*He writes—then folds the letter, and seals it with a wafer.*

MARWITZ (*approaching*).

Your Highness has finished ?

PRINCE.

You are in great haste, methinks. I will read over again what I have written ; and yet—no, no—better not—there, take it !

MARWITZ (*taking it quickly*).

Within two minutes it shall be in her Highness's hand. [*He hurries out.*

PRINCE (*calling after him*).

Marwitz !—gone ! (*He breathes deeply—rubs his forehead—goes to the window—returns ;*

seats himself at the writing-table — takes the penknife abstractedly, and opens the pocketbook to replace it. His eye falls on the letters within — he turns them over hurriedly, and then throws them down on the table.) What am I about? they are nothing to me now! (*He takes them up one after another.*) Those were happy times, when I received and read them with a beating heart! The handwriting brings to my mind her whom I thought I loved—my chosen one. I can never get rid of that image in my fancy. (*He reads.*) Where is the letter of the seventh? (*He searches for it among the rest, and finds it.*) O here it is! in these sweet lines I thought I beheld revealed the whole soul of my Matilda! Matilda?—yes—but another Matilda—not her whom I love; and yet are beauty and sprightliness the first, the greatest qualities of a woman?—and even if it were so, is the Princess herself so deficient in charms? But then the soul which sparkles in the eyes of *my* Matilda—her love for me—the wrong she has suffered for my sake—Steinau's treachery—enough! it is so, and well is it that so it is.

Enter the MAJOR VON SOLLAU.

PRINCE.

What brings you here, my dear Major?

MAJOR.

Your Highness sent to me an hour ago, to say you wished to ride. The horses are ready.

PRINCE.

Ah, true—I remember; but I wish it no longer.

MAJOR.

Then I beg your Highness's pardon for having disturbed you.

PRINCE.

Not in the least—I am rather glad that you have come. I wanted a little amusement.

MAJOR.

On your wedding-day?

PRINCE.

Why not? Sit down, and now tell me something new.

MAJOR.

Of our journey? of the Princess-bride? But then I must warn your Highness that on this subject I should never have done. You are in truth a happy man, my lord, who may boast of having carried off the very pearl of princely maidens. And do not suppose that I am the only one who thinks so; the whole city, the whole country, are of my opinion.

PRINCE (*with a forced smile*).

Indeed!

MAJOR.

I had the greatest trouble, when we entered the gates of the town, to prevent the people from taking the horses from the carriage, and drawing it to the gates; so enthusiastic were they when they heard that she had bestowed the whole sum set apart for her wedding jewels on our hospital here.

PRINCE (*interrupting*).

I know all about that. Tell me something new—your last campaign—your last love adventure—anything.

MAJOR.

As for my love adventures, please your Highness, they are, I think, brought to an end.

PRINCE.

O impossible!

MAJOR.

I am near four and thirty: a man must settle at some time or other, and so I have resolved to take a wife.

PRINCE.

A wife!—you, Major? And who is the happy she?

MAJOR.

I have this morning obtained the consent of

a lovely and amiable woman, and nothing is wanting to my happiness but your Highness's concurrence.

PRINCE (*smiling*).

A lovely, amiable woman! I think I could guess her name—ha! it begins with a W?

MAJOR (*eagerly*).

Is it possible? your Highness knows all then? This is beyond my hopes!

PRINCE.

Why, the lady, methinks, has distinguished you pretty openly.

MAJOR.

Openly—I know not—but kindly——

PRINCE.

The widow von Wertheim—is it not?

MAJOR.

Your Highness's pardon—the young Baroness von Wallerbach.

PRINCE.

Wallerbach!!

MAJOR.

Matilda von Wallerbach—your Highness may have remarked her—the pretty maid of honour in the suite of the Princess!

PRINCE (*springing from his chair*).

She?—impossible!—it is not so!

MAJOR.

Impossible? when I assure your Highness that the young lady herself——

PRINCE.

It is impossible, I tell you;—confess now, Sollau, that you were bribed to this, and I will forgive all!

MAJOR.

Bribed to do what?—to fall in love with a pretty woman, my lord?

PRINCE.

Has not my Grand Chamberlain something to do with this?—say so at once.

MAJOR.

The Grand Chamberlain?—with all due respect for that excellent old gentleman, he is not exactly the person I should select on such an occasion.

PRINCE.

The Princess then?

MAJOR.

I think Lady Matilda would hardly venture to speak to her Highness on the affair to-day—but——

PRINCE (*bursting into fury*).

The devil take women, wooing, and wooers!

[*He rushes out.*]

MAJOR.

What upon earth is the matter with him?

there must be something in the wind;—faith, he very nearly frightened me. *[Exit.*

The scene changes to the Princess's chamber.

The PRINCESS—the COUNTESS VON THALHEIM.

COUNTESS.

Your Highness should have sent for me: it is contrary to all etiquette that a gentleman should intrude himself into your presence without having observed the usual forms, and particularly *that* Marwitz: I cannot endure the man.

PRINCESS.

Think of it no more, my dear Countess; he was not in my way—I did not mind him.

COUNTESS.

Will not your Highness think of your toilette? the hairdresser waits in the anteroom, and we have not quite two hours before the ceremony.

PRINCESS.

Too early yet.

[She seats herself at a table, and takes up a book to conceal her agitation.

COUNTESS.

Your Highness has not looked at your bridal dress; it is as simple and elegant as it is

costly. It has come direct from Lyons—shall I have it brought here?

PRINCESS (*abstractedly*).

What did you say?

COUNTESS.

And the set of ornaments to match—you cannot judge of the effect until you see both together. (*After a pause, aside*)—I wish I could divert her mind, though but for a few moments—but, alas! I fear she knows too well how matters stand. [A knock at the door.

PRINCESS.

Some one knocks, my dear Countess: see who it is. (*The Countess goes out.*) This suspense is terrible to bear!—even now, perhaps, my fate may be decided past recall—I commit myself to Heaven—(*clasping her hands, and looking upwards*)—let but strength be granted to me, to do nothing unworthy the dignity or the duty of a woman!

COUNTESS (*returns with a letter in her hand*).

It was well I went myself—that wretch Marwitz was there again. I told him, at once, your Highness was not visible, and he gave me this billet from the Prince to deliver to you.

PRINCESS (*eagerly*).

To me? O give it—give it——

COUNTESS (*anxiously*).

Read it then.

PRINCESS (*tearing open the letter—reads*).

COUNTESS.

Now—what can he say—what is it—I beseech your Highness? You turn pale—you tremble—sit down, for Heaven's sake.

[*The Princess sinks upon a chair.*]

COUNTESS.

There must be something dreadful in that paper.

THE PRINCESS (*commanding herself with effort.*)

May I beg of you, dearest Countess, to leave me for one moment?

COUNTESS.

I go—but only—O tell me at least——

PRINCESS.

In a quarter of an hour—you must—you *shall* know all.

[*The Countess retires to the window, looks out, leaves the room for a short time, returns, and remains behind the Princess's chair.*]

PRINCESS.

Be silent, wounded feeling—insulted womanhood! for what is now to be done, must be resolved in cool blood. This letter is too plain in tenor and expression to be misunderstood; and

since he has found courage to tell me in direct terms that he intends to reject me, it will not cost him much more to do it. The die is cast—we are divorced for ever; whether rightfully or not, let him answer that:—be mine the duty to see that what is now unavoidable, should take place with as little offence to my own people, as little mischief between the two countries as possible. And this I must effect—but how? by what means? However I may resolve, myself must be the victim—*that* I feel. (*After a pause.*) It must be so; there is no other way. No blame must fall on the Prince; for in that case my dear father's warmth—his hatred against the Prince's whole family, so recently subdued—O! it were fatal!—and now, though he regard me as an undutiful daughter—though his anger fall upon me in consequence, yet will he never know how I have been scorned; and thus I spare my good father that bitterest trial of all. (*She seats herself, and writes, with an air of profound melancholy, but with rapidity and decision—then folds the letter, and writes the address.*) There they lie—the most momentous words I ever penned in my life!—Countess!

COUNTESS (*approaching*).

Your Highness has wept, I fear.

PRINCESS (*firmly*).

Not so! Countess—dear Countess! I con-

jure you, by all the friendship you have ever shown me—promise me—grant me one request.

COUNTESS.

Your Highness has only to command me—I am ready.

PRINCESS.

Promise me to maintain an everlasting silence on the events of to-day,

COUNTESS.

Why so?

PRINCESS.

Neither my father nor the world must ever know what has impelled me to the step I am about to take.

COUNTESS.

What step? you alarm me!

PRINCESS.

Thalheim!—but for heaven's sake no remonstrances,—we leave the court this evening. I say *we*, for I hope—I trust you will accompany me?

COUNTESS.

To the end of the world! but may I not know——

PRINCESS (*holding out the Prince's letter*).

There—read!

COUNTESS (*after reading it*).

This is most unjustifiable! most atrocious!

PRINCESS.

No remarks, Countess! but you see at once——

COUNTESS.

O when our gracious Duke hears of this insult!—

PRINCESS.

You will be silent—and, besides yourself, no one knows anything of the true state of things, except, indeed, those whose interest, much more than mine, it is to bury all in secrecy. See that an express be sent off instantly with this letter to my father.

COUNTESS (*takes the letter*).

And will your Highness at once return to him?

PRINCESS.

No; for the present I shall take refuge in the convent of St. Mary, on the frontier; it is only about fifteen miles* off, and we can travel all night. Tell my chamberlain to have the carriages and horses ready, and let my women make the necessary preparations.

COUNTESS.

O! reflect, your Highness!——

PRINCESS.

No time is left me for reflection: I must act.

* About seventy English miles.

Do what I have just desired, as you hold dear my honour and my peace, and then—send hither the Baroness Matilda.

COUNTESS.

Matilda!

PRINCESS.

Yes—instantly.

COUNTESS.

I obey your Highness. (*Aside.*) But for the letter, I will take leave to think farther of it.

[*Exit.*

PRINCESS.

Yes! I am more tranquil. What I do costs me so dearly, that—that I may be assured it is right.* I have scarcely yet dared to look steadily to my future fate; exposed to the censure of the world—its scorn, perhaps,—my self-confidence betrayed, and doomed henceforth to a life of seclusion,—what remained to me but my father's love? and even that I have sacrificed! Desolate I stand at the outset of my life—and see all the hopes and plans of my youth withered in their bloom: they sprang up and were cherished in the wish to do good, and merely to avoid doing harm costs me—my ALL! (*She remains lost in thought.*)

* A woman's logic!—reasoning which I have heard in my time from many women who were not princesses.

Enter MATILDA.

PRINCESS (*rising quickly*).

Ah ! 'tis you, my dear Matilda ?

MATILDA.

The Countess von Thalhein has just told me that your Highness wished to speak with me. I trust there is no mistake ?

PRINCESS.

None, my dear—I was really desirous to see you ; I have much to say to you : be seated.

MATILDA.

Your Highness's condescension—

PRINCESS.

No more of that ; these moments are too important to be wasted in empty phrases. I must in the first place acquaint you with the resolution I have formed ; for that must determine the course you will yourself pursue.

MATILDA.

A resolution ?

PRINCESS.

I shall leave the court this evening, and take up my abode in the convent of St. Mary on the frontier, there to await my father's commands.

MATILDA (*in the utmost confusion and embarrassment*).

Do I hear aright ? You will not surely ! I beseech your Highness—

PRINCESS (*giving her the Prince's letter*).

This letter will convince you that my remaining here a moment longer is out of the question.

MATILDA (*opening the letter, glances at the signature*).

From the Prince? It is not fitting—I dare not presume—(*Returning it.*)

PRINCESS.

Read it, I beg—I command!

[*Matilda reads, the paper trembling in her hand.*]

PRINCESS.

Well, my dear! what think you?

MATILDA.

Horrible! what must your Highness think of me? and yet I protest that till this moment I heard nothing—knew nothing. I have given no cause—I confess indeed—I did see him once, at the house of the Baron von Steinau, but how could I ever dream——? I hope your Highness will believe that I am equally amazed and indignant.

PRINCESS.

Be assured that I do not doubt you;—I not only acquit you of all blame, but your conduct this day has won you my lasting esteem and friendship. I will not easily forget, Matilda, that, to save my peace, you would have fled the presence of the man you loved!

MATILDA (*almost overwhelmed.*)

What means your Highness?

PRINCESS.

Do not tremble thus, nor shrink from me because I have read your heart. Now that my fate is irrevocably decided, it can signify nothing; the Prince is nothing to me now—and his love for you—nothing—except as regards yourself. Matilda! how do you intend to act?

MATILDA.

I—I am wholly at your Highness's disposal—it depends on you alone to decide—to command.

PRINCESS.

Do not take ill what I am about to say, Matilda, nor attribute it to any feelings of feminine jealousy or offended pride. Listen to me! the Prince loves you, and is master of his own actions; it is *possible* that he might, in spite of all conventional obstacles, raise the beautiful and noble Matilda von Wallerbach to his throne:—it is *possible*—I repeat—but, Matilda, he will *not* do it—believe me!

MATILDA.

Can your Highness suppose that any such presumptuous hopes——?

PRINCESS.

Allow me: I do not give you my opinion as an infallible prediction; perhaps I may be mis-

taken—*perhaps*!—and will you stake your peace and fair fame on a *perhaps*? And even supposing the best, would it be wholly indifferent to you, to be stigmatised as a heartless, treacherous friend!

MATILDA (*hiding her face*).

Would you crush me?

PRINCESS.

No—but point out the way in which you may at once secure your honour, without forfeiting the happiness you perhaps have reason to expect, or at least to hope. To compel you is not properly in my power, were it my inclination; though in my suite, you have not formally entered my service;—but to assist and counsel you as the young girl trusted to my protection—this I regard as my duty. Matilda! if you put any faith in my friendship, fly, I conjure you, from this court—return to your native place—I have earnestly recommended you to my father's kindness——

MATILDA.

O Heavens!

PRINCESS.

Without divulging the reasons for the particular interest I take in your welfare: the Countess von Thalheim has promised me the most inviolable secrecy—you may therefore be

assured that no one at home will ever suspect the true state of the case. My divorce will sufficiently account for your return. Safe within the circle of your own kindred, you can wait with propriety till your fate is decided—and you will not wait long: if the Prince's love be something more than the mere caprice of a youthful fancy, it is better that he should seek you, and lead you forth in all honour from your paternal home: and if it be nothing more, you have, by this magnanimous resolve, avoided the loss of your reputation on the one hand, and the misery of an unequal and unhappy marriage on the other. Do not reply: I require no answer at present. I have discharged my conscience, and you are, and must remain, mistress of your own actions. (*She goes to the table, opens a casket, and takes out a small case, which she gives to Matilda.*) And now—accept this—wear it for my sake, that none may say I parted from you in displeasure.

[*She embraces Matilda, kisses her on the forehead, and leaves the room quickly.*

MATILDA (*following*).

Your Highness!—dearest Princess!—she's gone—and has taken with her my peace—my self-esteem—and all my confidence in mine own heart! O had I earlier known her as she is! earlier learned to appreciate this angelic being—

before I had listened to that Marwitz! I came here rebelling in heart against the reproaches I expected: steeled against all—prepared for all—for all—but to find that she thinks far better of me than I deserve—esteems me more guiltless than I really am! (*She opens the case*). Her portrait—the portrait of that angel!—and I must wear it on my bosom—that whenever I look down with shame, that mild reproachful glance may encounter mine! O that I could erase this day from my existence—that I could stand where I stood but yesterday! And yet—have I then erred so far that there is no return possible?—If I could—? yes! it shall be done instantly—and though the step were too late to do her service—yet for my own sake!—I must be reconciled with myself, or die! [*Exit.*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE—*The Prince's chamber.**The PRINCE seated at a table—a book in his hand.*

PRINCE.

I cannot command my attention. (*He throws down the book, and looks at his watch.*) Seven o'clock—one whole hour! sixty eternal minutes gone, and no answer yet! Walter!

Enter a VALET-DE-CHAMBRE.

No letter for me yet?

VALET.

None, your Highness.

PRINCE.

Very well.

[*Exit Valet-de-chambre.*]

PRINCE.

I know not why, but this silence affects me

more than the bitterest, the most angry reply. Reproaches are the expression of anger—silence of contempt. Despised by *her*?—I cannot bear the thought. (*After a pause.*) Walter!

VALET-DE-CHAMBRE (*entering*).

VALET.

Did your Highness call?

PRINCE.

Is the Princess in her chamber?

VALET.

I know not, your Highness.

PRINCE (*angrily*).

Not know! What do you mean by shrugging your shoulders, fellow?

VALET.

Your Highness, the people say—but it is not fitting to repeat it to your Highness.

PRINCE (*angrily*).

But if I insist upon hearing—upon knowing it?—what do the people say?

VALET.

I cannot conceive, your Highness, how the report arose, but it is said in the palace, that the Princess's trunks are packed—and that a berline, with post-horses, is ordered to be at the garden-gate at eight o'clock precisely.

PRINCE.

Who told you this?

VALET.

One whispers it to another. I think it is known through the whole court by this time.

PRINCE.

So !—all is over.

VALET.

Not an hour ago I saw your Highness's groom, Conrad, running to the post-house;—a letter from the Princess to the Duke, her father, is to be sent off by express immediately.

PRINCE.

Enough.

[*The Valet leaves the room.*]

PRINCE (*after a pause*).

She does well to fly me—to call up her outraged dignity, and give me over to the enmity of her father, and the detestation of mankind. She came here—her heart overflowing with confidence and love—heaven directed, as she supposed—trusting in my vows, and in the heart I had proffered her:—and I returned insult for kindness—hatred for love—and for what? Let me confess it—only, blind fool that I am! in defiance and contradiction: or why is it that the Wallerbach has become so indifferent to me? I have bartered the possession of a real treasure for an empty idol.

Enter the COUNT.

COUNT (*aside*).

Methinks we are at the turning of the tide.

PRINCE (*hurrying to meet him*).

What is it?—a letter?

COUNT.

Only a trifle: the burgomaster begged to know whether your Highness will receive the congratulatory address from the city deputies this evening, and I told him——

PRINCE (*hurriedly*).

What?

COUNT.

That, for to-day at least, it was out of the question.

PRINCE.

Right.

COUNT.

Au reste, everything has proceeded in accordance with the wishes of your Highness.

PRINCE.

How so?

COUNT.

Your Highness knows without doubt that the Princess's departure is fixed for this evening?

PRINCE.

Indeed!

COUNT.

Thus there remains no farther obstacle to your views with regard to the Lady Matilda.

PRINCE.

Count !

COUNT.

Why that look of surprise and displeasure ? I have reconsidered the subject—and begin to think your Highness not so far wrong—after all.

PRINCE.

Really ?

COUNT.

The deception practised by Steinau frees you from all obligation on your part. The Baroness von Wallerbach has beauty, wit—is in love with your Highness—at least you have reason to suppose so—

PRINCE (*bitterly*).

Have I indeed ?

COUNT.

The Princess appears to have taken her decision at once like a sensible woman ; she perfectly understands that, after such a *scandale*, she can no longer hold her position in society ; and on leaving this, she will take up her residence at the convent of St. Mary on the frontier.

PRINCE.

In the convent ! Saldern, you will drive me distracted !

COUNT.

I thought to make your mind easy, my gracious lord ! As long as I saw any hope of reconciling you with the Princess, your Highness knows that I pleaded for her.

PRINCE.

I know it. (*Pauses.*) Did you hear that the Princess had sent off an express to her father ?

COUNT.

I had the letter in my hand.

PRINCE.

The victory is yours, Saldern ; but do not triumph too soon. Things have gone far ; but shall I, therefore, give up all as lost ? If I now fly to her—if I tell her—but no—O no!—too late ! I dared to outrage her when she stood before me all gentleness and patience ; and now that she has been roused to assert herself, shall I bow the knee before her ? besides, all is publicly known—even the Duke himself will in a few hours be informed of everything.

COUNT (*taking out a letter*).

Not sooner than your Highness pleases ; the express is not despatched : here is the Princess's letter.

PRINCE (*about to seize the letter*).

O give it to me!

COUNT (*withholding it*).

Your Highness—a letter from a daughter to her father!

PRINCE.

Do you think I would dare to violate it? I will only keep it: it can be nowhere safer than in my hands, methinks. (*He takes the letter.*)

Enter MARWITZ hastily.

MARWITZ.

Your Highness, I have just heard that the Princess—— (*Perceiving the Count.*) Good evening, your Excellency.

PRINCE.

What brings you here, Baron von Marwitz?

MARWITZ (*in a low voice*).

I came to inform your Highness that the Princess is preparing to leave the court in a few moments. Your Highness must not permit such a thing: it will embroil us with the Duke her father. We must endeavour to soothe her Highness, and then——

PRINCE (*contemptuously*).

Go—leave me: I have no time to listen to your devices now.

MARWITZ (*looking at the Count*).

Ah, I see; but I trust your Highness will remember that in all this affair I have only obeyed orders.

PRINCE (*impatiently*).

It may be so. I would be alone.

MARWITZ.

If your Highness should have heard of the proposals of Major von Sollau, I can only assure you——

PRINCE.

Let him woo whom he will, and marry whom he likes—I have far other things to think of!

MARWITZ (*aside*).

Not jealous! then we are at the last gasp.

PRINCE.

Saldern, think of me as you will, I *must* know the contents of this paper. (*He tears open the Princess's letter.*)

COUNT.

For heaven's sake reflect.

PRINCE.

I must! I must!—it contains the sentence of my fate!

[*He reads hurriedly, and with increasing emotion; at length he covers his eyes, and sinks into a chair.*]

COUNT.

What ails your Highness ?

PRINCE.

Astonishment, admiration, remorse ! (*Rising.*) There, take it !—no, *I* will read it. Listen, and you too, Marwitz ! You will then confess, like me, that till this hour you never knew what real magnanimity was. (*He reads.*) “ My dear father ! I regarded it as a touching proof of your paternal love and anxiety for my welfare that you had selected for my husband a prince distinguished for every quality of mind and heart ; yet have I presumed to sunder for ever the bond you had blessed. I think I hear you demand, in angry surprise, the reason for such a step. O my dear father ! what will you say when I confess to you that I can give none, except, perhaps, an unfortunate mistrust in myself, which convinces me—notwithstanding the esteem which the Prince has expressed for me—that I am not capable of making him as happy as he deserves to be. When you receive these lines, I shall be already at the convent of St. Mary, where I shall await your commands. Matilda von Wallerbach, who has proved herself worthy of my entire esteem, returns to your court. I recommend her most particularly to your protection and goodness.”—Now, my lords, what say you ?

COUNT.

By heaven, this is beyond my hopes !

MARWITZ.

Noble, faith !

PRINCE.

O that I were not so oppressed by the feeling of my own unworthiness !—that low at her feet—

A VALET-DE-CHAMBRE (*throwing open the door.*)

Her Highness the Princess !

PRINCE.

What !—how !—did I hear aright ? Saldern, my knees tremble—I shall sink !

COUNT.

Be composed ; what is past is past, and cannot be redeemed.

Enter the PRINCESS in a travelling dress, followed by the Countess.

PRINCESS.

Your Highness, pardon this intrusion ! (*Turning to Marwitz.*) Baron von Marwitz, will you have the goodness to desire my attendants to assemble in the left wing of the palace ?

MARWITZ.

I obey your Highness. [*He goes out.*]

PRINCESS (*to the Prince*).

Your Highness wrote to me, and I ought to

have replied to your letter ; but I deemed it more advisable to bring the answer myself than to trust it to another ; I wished also, before I quitted your palace, to take my leave, and at the same time to explain some part of my conduct which may have exposed me to misconstruction : these are the motives of my visit. My first intention was to request your presence ; but I—I feared a refusal, and, at least for a few minutes longer, I possess the privileges of a wife.

PRINCE.

Righteous heaven ! all is then decided ?

PRINCESS.

It is, irrevocably. The express which informs my father of my resolution is already far on the road. My carriage waits, and in a few moments I shall have left your court—for ever !

PRINCE.

Princess !

PRINCESS.

Fear no ill consequences from this sudden step, which a due regard for my own honour has forced upon me. I came hither to put an end to the ancient animosity between our families—through me it shall never be rekindled ; if you enjoin silence to the few who are acquainted with the real motives of my departure, neither my father nor the world will ever be informed of

them. As far as regards your conduct to me, I leave it to your conscience. I make no reproaches; only thus much let me say, that I felt most deeply, most painfully, what I endured in silence. Do not ascribe my composure to a want of womanly feeling. I am as susceptible on certain points as others, and not for all the crowns of the universe would I stoop to *beg* a heart. I would have *won* yours, had it been possible, even at the sacrifice of my pride; for I beheld in you, my affianced husband, the man to whom my father had confided me—whom it was my duty to honour and to love. I have tried, and have failed. I am now free, and am consoled by the thought that the bonds between us have been severed by no fault of mine. Farewell, Prince! farewell for ever! May you find that happiness in another which I was not thought worthy to bestow. [She turns to go.

PRINCE (*with deep emotion*).

Matilda! yes—you are free! I have lost you for ever! Return to your home, to the circle of those whose good angel you have hitherto been, until that happy man appear to whom Heaven has decreed the blessing I have thrown from me: yet, O do not despise me! and be assured that you leave behind you the most miserable of men!

PRINCESS.

What means your Highness?—what change is this?

PRINCE.

'Tis my heart speaks—this heart that never knew itself till now! I love you, Matilda! I feel that I have never loved but you, even under the features of another. O unblest error, which has cost me the happiness of my life!

COUNT.

Heaven forbid, your Highness! I hope better from the noble nature of the Princess. From whom could we expect forgiveness for past offences, if not from the sweetest impersonation of feminine gentleness and virtue?

PRINCE.

Matilda! if it were possible—I dare not, I do not presume to entreat—but think that the happiness of a whole people is at this moment in your hands!

[Sound of bells, and shouts of the people are heard from without.]

PRINCESS.

Ha! what means this?

Enter the MAJOR.

MAJOR.

The company assembled in the great saloon

wish to know whether they are to proceed to the Princess's apartment or here.

PRINCE.

How?—did I not in my madness order them——

COUNT.

Pardon me, your Highness, if I delayed to fulfil a command which I knew proceeded from your lips, and not from your heart. The ceremony has not been countermanded, and no one knows of this momentary infidelity to your bride.

PRINCE.

Heavens! what do you tell me? Matilda!—*(kneeling at her feet)*—angel and saint as you are, will you publish to the whole world that guilty error which is yet unknown?

PRINCESS *(with deep feeling)*.

I vowed before the altar to cling to you through good and through evil, and had never thought to quit your side unless you had driven me from it. So soon as you wish me to remain, I remain—without even asking what my fate is like to be.

PRINCE.

I deserve this mistrust, which the future shall dissipate. *(Kissing her hand.)* Never, never, shall you regret that you have raised a repenting

sinner to your heart; and this letter (*kissing it*) shall be the seal of my vow!

PRINCESS.

What letter?

PRINCE.

Your letter to the Duke your father—the true reflection of a gentle and generous nature!

PRINCESS.

Then my father?—

COUNT.

Remains ignorant of all the events of this day. What will your Highness tell him in your next letter?

PRINCESS.

That I am happy! that I have found the husband my heart had imaged to itself!

PRINCE.

O if indeed you do not quite despise me, I may hope one day to win your approving love!—Major, (*turning to him,*) you behold in me the happiest of men!

MAJOR.

And your Highness beholds in me one not less happy. I have just been formally betrothed to the Baroness Matilda.

PRINCESS.

Matilda!

MAJOR.

With your Highness's consent—and I trust I am not deceived in my choice.—(*In a low voice to the Prince.*) Do not look on me strangely, your Highness! my lovely bride has told me all. I had not presumed, perhaps, to enter the lists with the Prince, but I am well pleased to have supplanted the Count von Holm.

PRINCE.

Ah! that unlucky Holm! he is banished henceforth from my court. Tell the company we shall appear immediately in the grand saloon.

COUNTESS.

Immediately? impossible! the Princess is still in her travelling dress.

PRINCE.

I did not observe it.

PRINCESS.

I fly to change it—but I will preserve it while I live: it shall serve to remind me that if man conquers through courage and strength, the woman's weapons are gentleness and patience.

The curtain falls.

THE END.

THE COUNTRY COUSIN.

(Der Landwirth.)

A PLAY.

IN FOUR ACTS.

FREELY TRANSLATED.



REMARKS.

THE original title of this play is "Der Landwirth," a word which may signify either a farmer, or one who has the management of a landed estate. It was first acted at Dresden in the beginning of the year 1836, M. Emile Devriént playing the beautiful character of Rudolph. Next to the "Oheim," it has proved the most popular of the Princess Amelia's plays, and is, I think, more calculated to please the English taste. It appears to me very lively and elegant.

The translation here given is by no means *literally* faithful, as in the foregoing pieces. It was executed more than a year ago, with a view to the English stage, and I have not thought it necessary to alter it, the deviations from the original text being immaterial, and in no respect changing its spirit or the truth of the characters. A few lines, which are interpolations, are marked by inverted commas. Perhaps I ought to apologise for the manner in which the dialogue runs every now and then into a sort of halting blank verse. I can only say that it happened almost unconsciously: the words seemed thus to arrange themselves without effort or transposition. The style of the Princess Amelia is particularly clear and elegant, without ornament or affectation; but the construction of German prose is in itself poetical to an English ear.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

BARON VON THÜRMER, *A Saxon Nobleman.*

EDWARD, *His Son.*

RUDOLPH, *His Nephew.*

COUNT VON LEISTENFELD, *A Bohemian Nobleman.*

COUNTESS MARIE VON LEISTENFELD, *His daughter.*

DAME BEATRICE, *Housekeeper in the Baron's country-house.*

LOUIS, *Edward's Valet de Chambre.*

LISETTE, *The Countess's Waiting-maid.*

GRIMES, *A peasant.*

The scene lies at the country-house of the Baron von Thürmer.

THE COUNTRY COUSIN.

ACT I.

SCENE—*A room.*

*Servants hurrying past with luggage—bells ringing,
and all the bustle of an arrival.*

BEATRICE.

Now if I could but guess what for all the world brings our old Lord down here just at this time?—hasn't he a palace in town, looking on the market-place, and fine friends in plenty—and horses and carriages, and all the means a great rich Lord could desire, to be flattered, fooled, robbed to his heart's content; and must he needs come down to the country to weary himself, and

worry his neighbours? Out on't! These fine folks from town never know, for pure pride of heart, what they would be at. When I think of the life we shall have of it, I could wish myself a dormouse to go to sleep for the next six months. I'd sooner have ten stranger-folk in the house than the master on't—for strangers must just be on their *p's and q's*,* and take what one gives 'em—but the master!—I warrant me, he thinks he may do just as he likes, and no more minds smoking tobacco under the noses of his ancestors, and going with his dirty boots all over my clean carpets—and the worst of it is, that all the time one must make him a low curtsy, and say, “Your humble servant, my Lord.”

Enter LOUIS.

LOUIS.

Madam Beatrice!

BEATRICE.

What's the matter now?

LOUIS.

My Lord desires me to say that you are to have the state-rooms set in order as soon as possible.

* *Müssen sich bücken und drücken*, is the German proverb.

BEATRICE.

My Lord says so, does he? Master Louis, my Lord says no such thing, or he doesn't know Dame Beatrice. Set the rooms in order, forsooth! where I have the ordering of things, they are always in order. And pray what may he want the state-rooms for?

LOUIS.

We expect visiters.

BEATRICE.

So—indeed? and who, I pray you?

LOUIS.

An old friend and schoolfellow of my Lord's—
Count Leistenfeld.

BEATRICE.

Only a gentleman!* heaven be praised, and defend us from lady-folk!

LOUIS.

And wherefore?

BEATRICE.

Bethink you, Master Louis, when I see only a gun and a pair of top-boots standing afore the room-door, I know I've only to have a comfortable arm-chair, and a few billets of wood laid by the stove, and all's done; but alackaday! when I see a lady's satin reticule and bandboxes, and smell eau-de-cologne, there's no end to the

* Eine Mannsperson.

wanting and the calling; first it's another looking-glass—and then a sofa, or a carpet,* or a footstool; and then I must make tea—or send up lemonade—and what my lady doesn't want, my lady's maid does. Lord save us, Master Louis, but them fine lady-folk are a mortal plague wherever they come!

LOUIS.

Then it's a plague you're very likely to have, Madam Beatrice, for they say the Count brings the young Countess, his daughter, with him.

BEATRICE.

What, must the man have a daughter too? Well, well, and when are these folks to come?

LOUIS.

Why, my Lord was in hopes they would have allowed him a week or a fortnight to prepare and give them a grand reception; but it seems the old Count is a very impatient old gentleman, who cannot for his life wait for anything; and so the news comes that our visitors are already at Thalberg, and that early this evening we may expect them here.

BEATRICE.

This very day! bless us all! And pray how long are we to keep them when they do come?

* Not generally to be found in a German bed-room.

LOUIS (*mysteriously*).

How long? that I suppose depends on certain circumstances.

BEATRICE.

What circumstances?

LOUIS.

O I can tell you they don't come only to amuse themselves like; I know all about it—and I've a great mind—but mum's the word: for you must know it's my young master's secret.

BEATRICE.

I'll be as secret—as secret as yourself—so now then. [*They draw chairs.*

LOUIS.

Why, you must know, they talk of a marriage of the young Countess——

BEATRICE.

With our young master?*

LOUIS.

With him: you see he knows her already—and he's in love with her desperate: and she knows him, and she's dying for love of him—that is to say, she's in love with him, without knowing him—or rather, to speak plainly, she knows him, and she doesn't know him—you understand?

* *Sunfer* is the proper title of a young nobleman, and given to both Edward and Rudolph.

BEATRICE.

I! I don't understand one word of it.

LOUIS.

You don't? Ha, ha, ha! I express myself, as we say, *diplomatically*—that you may *not* understand: we studied politics on our travels, and visited incog., Madam Beatrice; did you ever visit incog.?

BEATRICE.

No, never; whereabouts is it?

LOUIS.

Ha, ha, ha!—I see I must explain. You must understand that my young master introduced himself under another name, and I, not to betray him, did the same, and called myself *Henry*. Ah, many a pretty girl, at Prague, is now sighing after a certain Henry!

BEATRICE (*aside*).

The man is clean out of his wits.

LOUIS.

To travel incog., Madame Beatrice, is the only way to study men and manners, let me tell you. Any man's ready to serve any man, who is known to be rich and noble; no great art in getting a sweetheart when one produces one's credentials of rank and fortune: but when a young nobleman locks up his letters of credit in his writing-case, thrusts his stars and orders under

his waistcoat, drops his name and title, and yet creeps so near the heart of a pretty girl that she's ready to run off with him any day in the week, and live on soup-meagre in a cottage with him all her life long—ah, that's the thing that tickles the fancy—that's the true romantic for you!

BEATRICE.

Shall I bring you a glass of water, master Louis, with a little sugar and vinegar in it? I fancy your journey has given you a little touch of fever—eh?

Enter RUDOLPH.

RUDOLPH.

A thousand welcomes home, my good friend Louis! let me look at you! ah, you've grown thinner—that comes of travelling, Louis! Can I see your lord?

LOUIS.

Not yet, sir, I believe. His lordship was so tired with travelling all night, that he has just thrown himself on his bed.

RUDOLPH.

That's provoking;—he is displeased, perhaps, that I was not here to receive him, but I come this moment from Feldkirchen, where I have been busied all the morning with masons and

carpenters about the building of the new farmhouse. But your master, my cousin Edward, he is not asleep too, I suppose ?

LOUIS.

O no ! he has just walked into the garden.

RUDOLPH.

Bring him here, my good Louis ; run and bring him to me : I so long to see him ! and I must not stir out, lest my uncle wake and ask for me. But stay, Louis ! how did you get on at Prague ?

BEATRICE.

Ay, sir ! ask him that.

LOUIS.

Hush !—Why, sir, one may say that my master, among his equals, made an era, as I did among mine. We produced an effect, I can tell you. Bohemia is a fine country !—but I have it all down in black and white—it's the fashion, when one travels, to write a journal, and mine is at your honour's service—eighty pages of foolscap. (*Pulls out papers.*)

RUDOLPH.

Ha ! ha ! ha ! thank you, Louis : but you know the proverb—too much learning makes a man mad.* Go, bring my cousin quick !

LOUIS.

I'm gone, sir.

[*Exit.*

* Zu viel wissen, macht Stopfweh, is the German proverb.

RUDOLPH.

I cannot tell you how glad I am that my uncle has come back to us at last.

• BEATRICE.

Humph! he might have staid in town long enough for me.

RUDOLPH.

I hope you speak in jest, my good Beatrice? I should be angry else. He is so good! and I so love him!

BEATRICE.

I'm sure he's unkind enough to you, often and often.

RUDOLPH.

Unkind! never! true, he rebukes me sometimes—

For that I'm country bred, and know but little
Of the world's ways: but he means all in kindness,

And for my good.

BEATRICE.

If he had brought you up as he brought up his son, you might have been as clever as he is, I wot.

RUDOLPH.

But not clever enough to earn my own bread, as I do now. Dancing and fencing and music

are for the rich, and not for a poor devil like myself; my uncle knows that full well.

BEATRICE.

You might have gone to college and studied, like other young gentlemen.

RUDOLPH.

I *have* studied that by which I am to live—agriculture. It is through my uncle's kindness that I am better off than those who come from the university, and work for years without pay.*

BEATRICE.

Ay, ay—but methinks you might have been something better than a mere farmer.

RUDOLPH.

No, Dame Beatrice, no. I am here, for eight months in the year at least, the greatest man in the five villages round—a very pleasant consciousness of dignity, and one to which I assure you I am by no means indifferent.

BEATRICE.

You, with your name and quality, do you think it an honour to be your uncle's steward?

RUDOLPH.

Yes, an honour: for thus I am enabled to repay my benefactor some small part of what I owe him; for what remains over and above, may

* See the introductory remarks to *The Young Ward*.

Heaven reward him duly! Gratitude lays no heavy burthen on a willing heart, and gladly will I remain his debtor all my life long.

BEATRICE.

Good Lord, to hear him talk! His debtor!—for what?

RUDOLPH.

For all I have—for all I know—for all I am. Does he not call me his *son*? Do I not call him *father*? and with reason, for a father he has been to me. He took me into his house a helpless, houseless orphan—Heaven bless him for it!

BEATRICE.

And pray whose fault was it that you were without a house and home? Who took the inheritance of your great-aunt Sumner from you?

RUDOLPH.

My great-aunt had a right to do as she pleased with her property, and my uncle was her nephew as well as my father.

BEATRICE.

Ah, but your father was the oldest, and the old lady's darling. Her first will was in his favour.

RUDOLPH.

She changed her mind then.

BEATRICE.

To be sure, your honoured father was but a spendthrift, as one may say——

RUDOLPH.

How now, Beatrice?

BEATRICE.

But I would wager, and so would many a one besides, that all was not right about that second will.

RUDOLPH.

What! the old story again? an old wife's gossip!

BEATRICE.

Whenever I think of it, and think that, perhaps, if all had been right, you would be our master here instead of—Oh, oh! let me hold my tongue!

RUDOLPH.

So best—I'm sure I do not hinder you.

BEATRICE.

Do not be angry—I nursed you in these arms a child; and if it be as I suspect—well—I say nothing—only this I *do* say—the unrighteous man shall come to judgment. Ill got, ill spent.

RUDOLPH.

Have you done? So now go get me breakfast—I'm sure I've earned it, listening to all this nonsense.

BEATRICE.

Well, well, I say no more. (*Aside.*) This is always the way, if one says a word about it. (*Aloud.*) Did you go down to see the poor keeper yesterday?

RUDOLPH.

No.

BEATRICE.

Nor the day before?

RUDOLPH.

No—he is well again, and able to sit up.

BEATRICE.

Ay—but you used to go and play cribbage with him.*

RUDOLPH.

I've left off playing cribbage.

BEATRICE.

And you used to take him the newspaper every morning.

RUDOLPH.

I send it by little Peter.

BEATRICE (*smiling*).

And how does that please his daughter, pretty Mistress Peggy? I fancy she is not so well satisfied with your absence.

RUDOLPH.

And even therefore 'tis I do absent myself—

* *Scarocf* is the German game.

you, my good Beatrice, are an elderly, discreet woman—you have been like a mother to me, and I don't care if I do tell you the truth. See you Beatrice—

I am no vain fool, I trust—no prating boaster
Where women are concerned; but I did think
This pretty girl had some kind thoughts of me.
I'm not such a novice, but I can translate
A look—a blush :

And—I—you know — a young fellow like
myself,

Could but be flattered by the preference—

But marry her? No!—to come to that extremity,

She must please me better than in truth she
does.

Now, in such case, what were the consequence
Of daily visits to the keeper's lodge?

“What feeling man—nay, I will say, what *honest*
man

“Would trifle with a helpless woman's heart,

“Or her good name? And there be moments,
Beatrice,

“And circumstances, when our best resolves

“Do melt like frost i' the fire.” I might be
tempted

To play the wooer—and this good, innocent
girl

Be led to cherish, through unfounded hopes,
A fancy into a passion, and refuse
Some suitable match in her own rank of life ;
And when she saw—that—that—in short, good
Beatrice,

I thought it better and more honourable
To go no more—and that's the truth.

BEATRICE (*wiping her eyes*).

I always said that there were few—very few
like you, and happy's the woman whose blessed
lot it shall be to partake yours !

RUDOLPH.

That happy woman, my dear good Beatrice,
dwells in the moon—for the earth holds her not.
What *I would* have, is not for me—what *I might*
have, still less.

Enter EDWARD (hastily).

EDWARD.

Do I see you once more, my dear, true-hearted
cousin ?

RUDOLPH.

My dear, dear Edward ! (*They embrace.*)
And did you, then, think of me sometimes on
your travels ?

EDWARD.

Surely ! can you doubt it ?

RUDOLPH.

Yet, if you had *not*, it would not have been

surprising, methinks ; what could you have seen or heard at Prague, to bring your country cousin to your mind ?

BEATRICE.

Prague must be a fine place, by all accounts.

EDWARD.

Ah, Dame Beatrice, how fares it with you ? I heard the people below calling after you most vociferously.

BEATRICE.

O—ay—about the state-rooms. I had well nigh forgotten them, in good faith—but when once I begin to talk, I'm apt to forget my business. That's a fault—a great one—but Lord save us ! talking is an old woman's only comfort.

[*Exit.*

EDWARD.

An old gossip ! Will she come back again ?

RUDOLPH.

Not for an hour or more—they are all busy—and you can tell me now all that I wish to hear—that is, if you can spare the time.

EDWARD.

O Rudolph ! 'twas delicious at Prague ! I wish you had been there.

RUDOLPH (*smiling*).

I should have cut but a sorry figure among your gay friends in the capital.

EDWARD.

Why, to be sure, you are a little behind the fashion—you do a little smack, as it were, of the country bumpkin—and then your shyness whenever you have to speak to a well-dressed woman—ha! ha! ha!

RUDOLPH.

If ever I visit Prague, it will be to see the glorious edifices—the palaces—the churches—the monuments of antiquity——

EDWARD.

Of old Queen Libussa, wouldst thou say? *
Alas! my good coz, I had no time for dingy old churches; there were too many pretty young Madonnas!

RUDOLPH.

Our people here have settled it, that you are to bring us home a Bohemian wife from Prague?

EDWARD.

'Tis not impossible—nor even improbable.

RUDOLPH.

Indeed! you have then made a choice?

EDWARD.

Perhaps I have!

Libu ssa, a Bohemian heroine of the middle ages, is supposed to have founded Prague in 722. In the old traditions of Bohemia she figures as a sorceress, as well as a queen and warrior.

RUDOLPH.

You happy fellow! and is she beautiful, Edward?

EDWARD.

In my eyes, she is.

RUDOLPH.

I need not ask if she be good and true,
For such she must be, if you love her,
Edward!

And rich, perhaps?

EDWARD.

The greatest heiress in Prague.

RUDOLPH.

And noble?

EDWARD.

A countess—and no less!

RUDOLPH.

And loves you truly?

EDWARD.

As I believe!

RUDOLPH.

Why, thou happiest of men! but you deserve
it all! I envy you not, dear Edward—on mine
honour, not.

EDWARD.

But, Rudolph, would you not like to find
some good pretty girl for yourself—eh?—one
who——

RUDOLPH.

O Edward ! I have had such visions,
When I have sat alone by the winter fire,
A gentle wife to welcome me at evening,
With looks and words of love, and children's
 voices,
And all the angel comforts of a home !
But I may put such thoughts out of my mind—
They are not for me !

EDWARD.

Why not ?

RUDOLPH.

A poor fellow like myself, without a farthing
in the world——

EDWARD.

May venture on marriage the more securely ;
for he may feel assured that where he is chosen,
'tis for his own sake alone ; while a rich man, on
the contrary—(*pauses.*) If you but knew, Rudolph,
how often I have been mortified by the thought
that I have owed the smiles of youth and beauty
only to my advantages of birth and fortune !

RUDOLPH.

Nay, coz, you are too modest !

EDWARD.

Ha ! ha ! my modesty ne'er stood in my way,
methinks.

RUDOLPH.

Have you not, besides your large fortune, every quality of mind and person that may win a woman's heart? Ah, had I but your form—your winning tongue—your grace i' the dance!

EDWARD.

Why, in faith, my dear coz, when I look in the glass and compare myself with others, I am vain enough to think I might be loved for my own sake,—but ere I venture on matrimony, I must have the assured conviction of it.

RUDOLPH.

And, with your intended bride, have you this assured conviction?

EDWARD.

Why, I have put her to the proof, and may with reason believe that I am loved for myself alone.

RUDOLPH.

I would fain know what proof,
In such a case, would satisfy a man,
Beyond that sweetest proof, which words and
looks,
Warm from an honest heart, would carry with
them!
What is your proof?

EDWARD.

Hush!—my father knows not a word of it yet.

RUDOLPH.

O then, as I guess, some lover's folly!—come! I'll shrive you.

EDWARD.

This very day he must know all, and you too, cousin—for, in regard to you, I am not wholly blameless; I confess it.

RUDOLPH.

Why, what have I to do with it?

EDWARD.

Do not start—'tis nothing—a mere jest—matter for laughter when we talk together. To-day, after dinner, we'll take a turn in the garden, and there I'll tell you all:—and hark ye, Rudolph, when you would marry, tell me: I'll speak to my father—he shall find something in that way to suit you. Why, man, he has lately made the acquaintance of one Von Holberg, an honest fellow—blest in five fair daughters, who have passed all their lives in their father's old castle in the country, waiting like so many enchanted damsels for some knight to release them from durance—ha, ha, ha! Possibly we might arrange something for you—what say you, coz?

RUDOLPH.

Possibly—but when my time comes, I will choose a wife for myself. I thank you, coz!

Enter the BARON.

BARON.

Rudolph! good-morrow to you. How goes it with you, boy?

RUDOLPH (*kissing his hand*).

O well! can it be otherwise when I see again my dear kind father? Welcome—welcome home!

BARON.

Rudolph, where were you when I arrived this morning?

RUDOLPH.

At Feldkirchen: the farmhouse there will be roofed in next week. Will you allow me, father, to come over this evening, and lay my year's accounts before you? We sold our wool off last October fair at a good price—fifteen dollars the pack.

BARON.

You are diligent in your calling.

RUDOLPH.

I would fain be so for your sake, my father—my benefactor!

BARON.

Benefactor ! pooh—nonsense—are you not my brother's son, and by adoption, mine ? I have done my duty, no more : your father's folly and extravagance are not your fault ; he——

RUDOLPH.

Leave my poor father to rest in peace, good uncle !—he was a kind man, as I have heard.

BARON.

Kind ! yes—but thoughtless, a spendthrift fool—a very profligate.

Had he inherited my aunt Sumner's fortune,
He had seen the end on't long before his death :
And you no better off than you are now—
Be sure of that !

RUDOLPH.

Of one thing I am sure—he was my father,
And from no other lips——

BARON.

Well, well—know this—'tis happy for you,
nephew—

The fortune fell to me—for thus I have been
Enabled to provide for you—you are
Content with your lot in life ?

RUDOLPH.

Most certainly.

BARON.

And never would have been, by your own
choice,

Anything different from what you are?—speak!

RUDOLPH.

I own there was a time when I much wished
to have gone into the army.

BARON.

And you wish it still?

RUDOLPH.

No, no—I do not—did not *then*, when once

I had reflected. My ambition, father,

Is of another temper:

What service had I done you in the army?

What honour gained for myself? In time of
peace,

A man may surely spend his life far better

Than at parade and drill; but let war come,

I'll beat my ploughshare into a sword, and show
you

How I can fight for you, my home, my
country,

These fields which I have sown!

BARON.

You are content then?

RUDOLPH.

I am.

BARON.

'Tis well ; content, my son,
Is our best good on earth—and one, believe
me,

Which riches cannot buy ; no—on the contrary !
(*sighs.*)

Wouldst thou be richer than thou art ?

RUDOLPH (*smiling*).

Why, truly, father, a little more would be no
harm !

BARON.

Indeed ! well—I will think of it, some time or
other. Now go ! and leave me with my son
alone—I have to speak with him. (*As Rudolph
goes.*) Stay Rudolph—from the price of the wool
of which you spoke erewhile, keep for yourself
a hundred dollars—do you hear ?

RUDOLPH.

A hundred dollars !—for what, dear father ?

BARON.

For your good management — good every-
thing !

RUDOLPH.

My dear father ! you do not think that what I
said just now—(*Taking the Baron's hand, which
he withdraws coldly.*)

BARON.

I think nothing—'tis yours : now leave us.

RUDOLPH.

A thousand thanks! Doubt not that I shall
know

Right well to spend it! (*To Edward.*) Farewell
for a while

We'll meet in the garden. [*Exit.*

BARON.

A thoughtless jolterhead is this boy Rudolph,
And ever will be!

EDWARD.

A good, foolish fellow; blunt, but honest.

BARON.

And never had been fit for aught on earth
But what he is—a clown.

EDWARD.

I don't know that; he is not so stupid either,
and had he not been brought up here among
your peasants——

BARON.

What then? he had been by chance
A ragged scholar, or a silly officer?
No; Nature stamped him for the plough; how-
ever,
We may do something better for him—in time.

EDWARD.

Truly I hope so; for, after all,
He is your nephew and my cousin, father!

BARON.

True—and would you believe it, Ned, but for your sake, this fortune I inherited from your aunt Sumner were nought to me but bitterness and vexation?

EDWARD.

Why so, father?

BARON.

I have had no peace since it fell to me. The prejudice in favour of the first-born seems to exist in the very nature of man, and every one envies a younger brother any extraordinary good fortune. Do they not say that I contrived to set my aunt against my brother—nay, took advantage of her dotage?—Dotage! did she not speak coherently and sensibly to her last breath? had I not good and sufficient witnesses to prove that her last will was made, she being of sound mind!—and yet they dare to say——

EDWARD.

What signifies what they say, since you have a clear conscience, and, what is better, a clear estate? Let them talk!

BARON.

Ay, as you say, let them talk; they cannot talk me out of the Thalberg estates; and yet—and yet—it wrings me at the heart that I should be a rich man at my kinsman's cost.

EDWARD.

Why, then, give Rudolph something from your riches,
And, trust me, father, the more you give to him,
The better pleased am I.

BARON.

Indeed ! so I would have it. Look you, Edward, this is one reason why I wish your marriage with the Countess Leistenfeld were settled. She is rich—*rich* ! With her fortune, the estate of Thalberg, and twenty thousand dollars in hand, you may have one of the most splendid establishments in the capital ; and then, Ned, suppose—just suppose—I were to make over this little property here to Rudolph ?—after my death, I mean.

EDWARD (*in amazement*)

This estate ! You jest, my lord !

BARON.

Such a disposition of my fortune might indeed cause some wonder ; but I care not for the world's wonder, or its censure—no—nor yours either, sir. I tell you plainly, if I could think you base and niggardly——

EDWARD.

I—niggardly ! I would to heaven that the tradesmen and tavern-keepers could say as much for me, and then you had not been called on so

often to pay my debts. Ha! ha! ha! your pardon; but at that word niggard I must expire—ha! ha! Edward von Thürmer a miser!

BARON.

If it be not so, you will not surely envy your poor fool of a cousin——

EDWARD.

Envy!—*him*? I was only astonished at the magnificence of your generosity. 'Tis allowable, I presume, my lord?

BARON (*hesitating*).

I should think that, when in possession of this estate, he would be satisfied?

EDWARD.

Satisfied!!—why I should think so, truly!

BARON.

I don't suppose his spendthrift father would have left him the value of this single estate out of the whole property?

EDWARD.

Hardly, if all be true that men say of him.

BARON.

And more had only been a hurt and hindrance
To one of Rudolph's nature;
So my mind's easy; and from this time forth
We'll speak no more of it—the thing is settled.
(*Pause.*) The Countess Leistenfeld arrives to-day—

You understand each other?

EDWARD (*smiling*).

Yes, and—*no* !

BARON.

You fright me, boy ! I will not hear of *no* !

EDWARD.

You have her father's promise, have you not ?

BARON.

I have—conditionally,

EDWARD.

And I—the daughter's heart without condition.

BARON.

You are ever so chary of your words, when I would question you of your sojourn in Prague——

EDWARD.

Why, I might tell my tale like Cæsar—came, saw, and conquered ! Cheer up, and think all's done !

BARON.

Coxcomb and braggart as you are, I know not what to think ! That the Count should never yet have answered the letter which I gave you for him, nor, in that which announces his arrival, once mention your visit, seems most strange.

EDWARD.

And is, notwithstanding, very simple ; for, in the first place, I never gave him your letter.

BARON.

Youngster! beware!

EDWARD.

And as to my visit, the Count has no idea that he has seen your son, and the young Countess is equally in the dark.

BARON.

What is all this?

EDWARD.

To present myself as your heir, as the bridegroom elect, appeared far too prosaic and commonplace. I wished to know for once what I was worth in a young maiden's eyes; and when I appeared in Prague, it was under the name, and with no other pretensions, than those of my cousin.

BARON.

Of Rudolph?

EDWARD.

Did you not observe that, during the first few days after my return, I hardly answered to the name of Edward?

BARON.

I cannot say I did; for often when I speak, it is as though you heard not.

EDWARD.

Well, in the character of my poor country cousin, I played off a whole battery of love-

making against the lady, and not without effect.

BARON.

Thou art mad, or dreaming !

EDWARD.

And then from time to time I would put on an air of the profoundest melancholy ; you know not, father, how charming, in the eyes of a sentimental young girl, is the disconsolate air of a poor orphan youth, dying of concealed love !

BARON.

O lord ! O lord !—well, sir, go on.

EDWARD.

I soon found that I had gained her attention ; in society her eye followed me : if she spoke, there was an unwonted softness in her voice, a certain expression of anxiety and tender pity : at the balls she encouraged me to dance—to converse—persuaded her father to invite me to his house, contrived that I should be included in all their parties of pleasure, and, as I heard from the best authority, made the most minute inquiries into my conduct and character ;—in short, the interest she felt for me was not to be mistaken, and my triumph was complete.

BARON.

Did you declare your love ?

EDWARD.

By sighs, by meaning looks, but not by words.

BARON.

And what, think you, will be the consequence, when in the supposed nephew she discovers my son ?

EDWARD.

The consequence? Only the most delicious, the most romantic scene—sublime!—but we must not disclose her error too soon—too suddenly; The surprise, the rapture, might be too much for the dear girl; and then I own I should like to see a little of the struggle between duty and inclination—see her lamenting—pining for her supposed Rudolph! O, without that, my triumph were still imperfect!

BARON.

It must not, shall not be;—the moment they arrive, I will let the father, ay, and the daughter, know——

EDWARD.

Good heavens, you will not do it, my dear father!—do not so cross your son!—spoil my romance?——

BARON.

If through these boyish tricks the match should fail, I tell thee, Ned, thy father will go mad!

EDWARD.

And the son too—for the girl pleases me ; but we'll not fail—no fear ! my dear, dear father ! Come, you have been so indulgent—have o'erlooked so many follies—give me my way but this once more, and I will promise for one whole year to be a very model of discretion. I will neither touch a billiard-ball—nor wager a ducat—nor ride your best horses till they are blown—I swear it: does this promise win you ? it does—it does ! and I will keep it fairly—
So come along—huzza ! for this one day
The father figures in his son's new play !

[*Exeunt.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE—*Changes to a room in a farmhouse, plainly but not meanly furnished. In the background two doors, and before one of them a large old-fashioned screen; on the one side a small bookcase, and on the other a writing-table with papers and account-books.*

RUDOLPH—*alone, looking at a rouleau of gold, which he holds in his hand.*

RUDOLPH.

A hundred dollars, after all, don't go quite so far as I thought—but can purchase pleasure, how much, I never knew before! Yes, I can understand, better than ever, why men are so eager in the pursuit of riches. A rich man must needs be

a happy man, if he can see around him every day as many joyous faces as I have seen to-day. (*Counts his money*). Now I have just forty dollars—enough to pay the schooling of Leonard's children, and the apprentice fee for the schoolmaster's son—and then there will be just enough left to buy the cloth for a new coat. Old Beatrice tells me that my uncle expects visitors: he must not be ashamed of me. (*A knocking at the door.*) Who knocks there?—come in.

Enter COUNT LEISTENFELD, *followed by the*
COUNTESS MARIE.

COUNT.

May I take the liberty?

RUDOLPH.

Whom have I the honour to receive?

COUNT.

A good friend of the family—for I presume you are one of Baron von Thürmer's people? his steward? his bailiff?

RUDOLPH (*with surprise*).

His steward?—at your service. Do you wish to be announced to his lordship?

COUNT.

Heaven forbid! I would entreat you rather, my very good friend, to conceal our arrival—for, look you, (*showing a rent in his sleeve,*) we must

change our dress before we venture to present ourselves at the castle: we have just had a most unlucky accident.

RUDOLPH.

An accident!

COUNT.

Our carriage has broken down, and lies yonder in the middle of the road just outside the village: have you a smith at hand?

RUDOLPH.

Not a hundred yards from the castle, in the red house yonder—I'll seek him instantly.

COUNT.

And can you procure a couple of stout fellows, that while the smith is at work would bring our baggage up here?

RUDOLPH.

Certainly.

COUNT.

I hope we shall not put you to much inconvenience, if we remain here meanwhile?

RUDOLPH.

Not in the least—if you can be content with such poor welcome as my house can offer: pray take a chair.

COUNT.

Excuse me.

RUDOLPH.

I entreat, (*brings forward an arm-chair*) ; the young lady looks quite pale.

MARIE (*sinking into the chair*).

'Tis nothing—only I was a *little* frightened.

RUDOLPH.

Shall I bring you a glass of water ?

MARIE.

I thank you, no—I feel already better.

RUDOLPH (*to the Count*).

With whom did you leave your carriage ?

COUNT.

Her waiting-maid and the men-servants are there keeping guard.

MARIE.

Pray, good sir, have the kindness to take care of our trunks—all my little finery is at stake—and pray take especial care of my bonnet-box, that it is not thrown upside down.

RUDOLPH (*bows and turns to the Count*).

Is the lady your daughter ?

COUNT.

My daughter.

RUDOLPH (*aside*).

She's beautiful as heaven ! (*To Marie*). I will take good care that nothing shall be injured.

[*Bows and exit.*]

MARIE.

Really, a very obliging, civilised sort of person !

COUNT.

A good fellow—I'll give him something handsome. (*Sits down*). Ah, I begin to feel that I have had a shake too. That fool of a postilion ! to drive like mad over the cross-roads till the axle-tree snapped in two !

MARIE.

You were so urgent with him to drive fast—faster—and so often promised him double pay—

COUNT (*rises abruptly, and walks about*).

Those fellows always jump from one extreme to another, and know no medium between creeping and galloping. Double pay ! confound him, does he expect to be paid for my torn coat and bruised shins ? and, worse than all, here will be an end of my excellent scheme for surprising our old friend here. If once the report of our accident is spread through the village, it will soon reach the castle, and then— what is the hour ?

MARIE.

Only twelve, papa.

COUNT.

That's well ; they don't expect us at the castle till after three—so there is time yet, if we are not betrayed, to trim ourselves up, and present

ourselves in state. How do you feel, Marie, at the thought of our visit?

MARIE.

Not *very* uneasy, papa ;—and you ?

COUNT.

Right glad at heart ! A thousand times have I thanked heaven that I had the power of engaging your hand before you were fifteen, and so was released at once from all the cares of careful fathers, ere they have provided a husband for an only daughter.

MARIE.

Not that I think that in any case I should have wanted lovers, papa.

COUNT.

Wanted them, say you ? why, all I feared was the being beset and overwhelmed with lovers, beaux, dangles, ballad-mongers, and such gentry. And then one had been too young, t'other too old, one too dull, another too witty—one too rich another too poor ; and then we should have had such heaps of love-letters, proposals, duels and declarations, sonnets and serenades, I should have been plagued out of my wits. Now you know, I hate to be annoyed——

MARIE (*smiling*).

True, papa.

COUNT.

Peace—peace and quietness are the only things worth living for. It is out of my love of peace that I never care to know what is going forward in my own house—not even what is for dinner. I have settled all beforehand with the old Baron—to save trouble, you are to be betrothed here, and married at Prague. Then I shall spend every summer with you in the country, you will spend the winters with me in town. Without my steward, my chamberlain, and my secretary, you know I cannot exist—

MARIE.

To the great advantage of the said three gentlemen.

COUNT.

They say this young Thürmer is a well-bred cavalier.

MARIE.

And they add, somewhat extravagant and self-conceited.

COUNT.

Ay, but they add, too, he has a right good heart.

MARIE.

Well, we are now to know him!
And if he prove, as I do hope he may,

Worthy my love, he shall my husband be !
Out of caprice or lightly, my dear father,
I promise you that I will not withdraw
The word you plighted for me : there may
 come
Considerations of a higher nature——

• COUNT.

What mean you, Marie ? I tell you all was
considered seven years ago. Considerations !
—what considerations ?

MARIE.

That, dearest papa, is for the present a secret.

COUNT.

A secret ! then I'll have nothing to do with it :
—by my faith, secrets are seldom of an agreeable
kind !

MARIE.

Trust to me, dear father ; you know I never
concealed anything from you but what I thought
would annoy you.

COUNT.

I know it well, Marie ; you are a good girl,
and have spared me many an unquiet hour. If
I thought this marriage would not be for your
happiness——(*Pause.*) Your heart is free ? (*Pause,*
she looks embarrassed.) Sure you can say thus
much ?—Marie !

MARIE (*hesitating*).

My heart? why—yes, papa—at least I hope so.

COUNT.

Now in Heaven's name——!

MARIE.

O don't look so frightened!

COUNT (*walking about in a heat*).

Ay, ay—that young Rudolph, the cousin of your intended—he that came so oft to visit us at Prague, and cast up his eyes and sighed to the moon, and made such whimpering faces as we sat at dinner, I expected every moment to see the tears drop into his soup—that sentimental puppy—you had no dislike to him?

MARIE.

Why should I dislike him?

COUNT.

No turnings! so it had been better. He interested you?

MARIE (*with animation*).

I can't deny it.

COUNT.

Confess he does so still—a little?

MARIE.

Nay, not a little; for, to speak truth, I think of him the livelong day.

COUNT (*with terror*).

The livelong day?

MARIE.

And all the livelong night—except when I'm asleep.

COUNT.

Marie!—

MARIE.

O don't look so alarmed? what does it signify?

COUNT.

What does it signify? to come here to marry one man, and love another?

MARIE.

Love! I love Rudolph Thürmer! did I say so?—papa, you frighten me. No, once indeed I fancied it, and then I felt again quite sure I did not—no, O no! I do not—or if—or if—the very least bit in the world, believe me.

COUNT.

And yet you think of him all day, and what's far worse, all night?

MARIE.

Because one thinks of a man, must one needs love him? I hope not so—for I should think of Rudolph, though I had never seen him. O believe me, father, 'tis quite another thing from what you guess. Let us change the subject. I would ask you—but then you must not take my

question in an ill sense—if I marry the Baron Edward, what is to be my marriage portion?

COUNT.

A hundred thousand dollars down, and heiress, besides, to my possessions.

MARIE (*clasping her hands*).

O delightful!

COUNT.

Does it so please you?

MARIE.

O not for my own sake—no!—but do not ask me why—it is *my* secret.

COUNT.

You are, and ever will be, a little fool!

MARIE.

You are, and ever will be, the best of fathers!

[*The clock strikes.*

COUNT.

What says the clock?

MARIE.

'Tis half past twelve.

COUNT.

I must go see what they are about, or we shall have them taking our baggage, and laying it down under the very windows of the castle.

MARIE.

Do not tire yourself, papa!

COUNT.

I must move about, lest I get stiff with these bruises. [*Exit.*

MARIE (*alone, after a pause*).

Love Rudolph Thürmer? no, I won't believe it,
Though it be true he interests, occupies me
More than man ever did before — poor Rudolph!

Pity, they say, is near akin to love,
And I do pity him.

And then the thought that in me lies the power
To change his fortune, to restore his rights,
Gives me a feeling for him—as though I were
His guardian angel, and he by Heaven thrown
On my protection. (*Pauses.*) Why did Braun
trust me?

It is a strange position I am placed in.
My father must know nothing till 'tis over,
Or he will fret himself into an illness;
And, besides him, whom know I that is fit
To be entrusted with a hideous secret,
Involving both the honour of the dead
And fate of the living? In this most difficult
task,

To which a simple woman could be called,
I must take counsel of mine own heart alone—
And better so; the path is plain before me;

I see it now, as clear as truth can make it.
None shall beguile me to the right or left,
With subtle reasonings and coward fears;
No — mine own conscience be my guide — my
judge,

And Heaven will bless the end! (*Pauses.*)

Poor Rudolph! is he
Still in Bohemia? or by this time returned?

(*Pause.*)

And yet I am not sure if I should wish
To find him here; and yet—why not?
This trial failing, then my intended husband
Is proved most worthless. I am at once re-
leased,

And free to love—to marry where I will.
If it succeeds, and Edward Thürmer prove
A man of honour, as I hope he will,
Then Rudolph will be happy; and methinks
That as a happy and a prosperous man
He will not be so dangerous to my peace.
Yet here I am, thinking of him again!
My father was i' the right—it is not fit—
I will o'erlook the library of our host,
I may find something
To turn the busy current of my thoughts.

[*She goes to the book-case.*

What have we here? “The Farmer’s Journal.”—
“On planting;”—“The Art of Fattening Cattle”—

ah!—but here above is something different: “History of the Jews,” the Odyssey and Iliad, Schiller, Shakspeare: our host, the Bailiff, has had, it seems, some education. Sweet Shakspeare!

Who never failed to charm me from myself,
Must help me now. [*Sits and reads.*]

Enter RUDOLPH (*he bows*).

RUDOLPH.

I have taken the liberty to show your father to my room; your trunks and boxes are on the way and in safe keeping, and your waiting-maid will attend you on the instant. Is there aught else that you will honour me by commanding?

MARIE.

I am truly ashamed to cause you all this trouble.

RUDOLPH.

'Tis with the best good-will—in faith it is. I would that every day a carriage might break down before my door that held such travellers—and no more hurt done. You have been reading, lady?

MARIE.

Pray pardon my indiscretion, but I found here a friend—Shakspeare. (*Showing the book.*)

RUDOLPH.

You love him, then! charming! for do you
know

He pleases me of all things?

I don't well understand

All the fine things the critics say about him,
But to understand *him* it needs but to be human,
And have a heart and soul.

MARIE.

You love reading, it seems?

RUDOLPH.

Yes, truly, but I've little time for reading;
Therefore take care to read but what is best.

MARIE.

Then you read *much*, although not many books.
(*After a pause.*) You must feel very lonely
here?

RUDOLPH.

Lonely! why so?

MARIE.

You can have but little congenial intercourse
with those around you.

RUDOLPH.

Pardon me—the intercourse with our peasantry is by no means so devoid of interest as you seem to think; these people, with their untutored minds, have often most sound and excellent

sense. Then our priest, with whom I spend my Sundays, is a good and learned man.

MARIE.

Are you married?

RUDOLPH (*smiling*).

Not yet.

MARIE.

You smile—perhaps you are about to marry?

RUDOLPH.

I? no, indeed! I smiled—it was a passing thought; but you, I presume, will marry?

MARIE.

That's as my destiny and my stars may rule it.

RUDOLPH.

You have—I pray you pardon me the freedom—perhaps a lover?

MARIE.

A lover? no, indeed!

RUDOLPH (*with animation*).

No? (*timidly*.) But suitors, maybe?

MARIE.

O that's a different thing!

We women, sir, a nice distinction draw

Between a lover and a suitor. Suitors have I!

RUDOLPH (*aside*).

There! I thought so.

MARIE.

What is the matter?

RUDOLPH.

The matter?—nothing—nothing in the world!

MARIE.

A strange man this! (*Aside.*) Your lord here, the Baron von Thürmer, is an old friend of my father's. What kind of man is he?

RUDOLPH.

O, an excellent man! His countenance, 'tis true, is not at first attractive, but once get over that, you'll like him dearly.

MARIE.

And his son, Baron Edward, is he here at present?

RUDOLPH.

He is.

MARIE.

What's your opinion of him—frankly?

RUDOLPH (*hesitating*).

He is not unworthy of his blood and lineage.

MARIE.

A little wild, or so?

RUDOLPH.

He is young and rich.

MARIE.

Somewhat self-conceited?

RUDOLPH.

Nay, he may stand excused—he is thought handsome.

MARIE.

And has committed follies—not a few, they say?

RUDOLPH (*smiling*).

Would you trust to the wisdom of a man who had never committed a folly in his life?

MARIE.

But you hold him as one incapable of a dishonourable act?

RUDOLPH.

Myself not more so!

MARIE.

Fond of money?

RUDOLPH.

Fond of spending it!

MARIE.

I thank you—that is all I wish to know.

[*She turns away thoughtfully.*]

RUDOLPH (*aside*).

Can this be Edward's bride? O no, no, no! I will not think it—dare not!

MARIE (*aside*).

This host of ours is sure no common person. I must, if we remain here, seek his acquaintance, and find out his history.

Enter LISETTE (with a bandbox).

MARIE.

Ah, Lisette! you are come?

LISETTE.

Yes, my lady, I am come; but, O my lady! I've been in such a flutter—such a twitteration!

MARIE.

What's the matter?

LISETTE.

What with the fright, and the overset, and all, I took on so after you were gone, and I was so nervous, if this good man here had not got me something from the inn, I should have been *annihilated*.

MARIE.

Are our trunks arrived?

LISETTE.

Yes, my lady; but now I look at you, your dress has escaped finely; so, if your ladyship pleases, I'll just do your hair up, and throw your scarf round you.

RUDOLPH.

Command all here—I take my leave.

MARIE (*smiling*).

Poor man! you will have reason to remember the luckless travellers who have thus invaded you!

RUDOLPH (*looking at her*).

I fear me, too much reason—pardon me. (*He bows. Aside as he goes off.*) Poor Rudolph! shut, shut your eyes—your heart—

'Tis a rich hot-house flower, and all unfit
To be transplanted to a poor man's garden!

[*Exit.*

MARIE—LISETTE.

LISETTE.

Soh! this is the bailiff's room then?

MARIE.

Good man! we have actually driven him from his own house.

LISETTE.

Nay, my lady, don't mind him; such a country-bred fellow has not every day the luck to receive a fair lady within his doors. Please you sit down—I'll bring a looking-glass.

[*The Countess sits down before the table; Lisette takes off her cap and bonnet; then takes out her comb, so that her hair falls over her shoulders.*

MARIE.

Must you take my hair down?

LISETTE.

O my lady! you forget that you are to be presented to your intended bridegroom: the first impression is everything, you know. (*After a*

pause.) I wonder is his cousin, Baron Rudolph, here?

MARIE.

For aught I know or care.

LISETTE.

Poor dear young man! O my lady! how desperate he was in love with you!

MARIE.

So it seemed at one time; but men have all such ways.

LISETTE.

Apropos to men, this bailiff here, our host, is not ill-looking.

MARIE.

Far from it; he has a fine open countenance, and is not without some sense and education. I fancy he has come of good parentage.

LISETTE.

Is he unmarried?

MARIE (*turning round*).

Lisette!—why, what is that to you?

LISETTE.

Why, my lady, I was just thinking that, if we are to remain in the country, I should be tempted to set my cap at him; the house (*looking round*) is pretty well, and the man too, considering—

MARIE.

You!—you marry this farmer?

LISETTE.

Why not, my lady? In the country men are scarce: one must not be too particular. To be sure, he hasn't the air—the—the—*je ne sais quoi* of my last lover, Mr. Henry; but he's like to make a more substantial husband, and I hope I should have your ladyship's good word.

MARIE.

Your tongue runs apace, Lisette. [*A knocking.*

LISETTE.

Ah, some one knocks! [*Knocking.*

MARIE.

Again! they are coming in! I cannot be seen thus—

[*She springs up and runs behind the screen; Lisette snatches up the bandbox, and runs after her.*

MARIE—LISETTE (*behind the screen*).

Enter GRIMES, looking about.

GRIMES.

Heaven grant I find him!—my last hope is in him. He must come down with it—*must!*—and he will, for he's good-hearted, and never yet could keep his money when he had it. No one to be seen?—in his own room perhaps. (*Goes to the door, and knocks.*) Squire!—your honour!—(*knocks*)—one word, please your honour!

MARIE (*peeping out*).

His honour!

LISETTE.

No farmer, then?

MARIE.

Perhaps some young gentleman who has come here to study agriculture. [*They draw back.*

Enter RUDOLPH *from an inner room.*

RUDOLPH.

Madam!—Ah! 'tis only you, good Grimes; I thought——

GRIMES.

Ay, 'tis only me, a miserable man—and ruined! unless you send me hence with help and comfort.

RUDOLPH.

What has happened?—you look wildly.

GRIMES.

I was yesterday with my landlord, that old miserly Baron Stiller; I was to have paid him two hundred dollars; but what with bad seasons, and my increasing family, and one thing or another, I could only make up one hundred.

RUDOLPH.

That was bad.

GRIMES.

I told him how it wasn't bad management, but

just ill luck, and nothing else, that made me behindhand. I told him to what ruin myself, my wife, my children—all, must come, if I must leave my farm—in vain: I must pay, or go.

RUDOLPH.

I must tell you fairly, my poor friend, that in all this you are not without fault. Remember what I told you—but, no! 'tis cruel *now*. I am grieved for you, and were it in my power to help you——

GRIMES.

O sir, it is! You can—you *will* be my good angel! See you, sir, I came down here just to tell you of my mischance; for I knew you would pity me; but in the village I hear that, only this morning, you received from our old lord a great rich present—a sum, perhaps, you will spend or waste—who knows? and me and mine it would redeem from ruin. If you would lend it to me for one year—only *one* year—I would repay it honestly.

RUDOLPH.

Is it one hundred dollars you want?

GRIMES.

Less were of no use.

RUDOLPH.

And if you have them not?

GRIMES.

I am a ruined man: my poor wife must go to service, and my children go beg on the highways.

RUDOLPH.

Oh, why did you not come to me but an hour sooner?

GRIMES.

Do you mean to say that all is gone?

RUDOLPH.

I have but forty dollars left out of a hundred.

GRIMES.

Then Heaven forgive you! See how great people trifle away sums that would build up poor men's houses!

RUDOLPH.

Grimes! I can pardon much to your present misery; but I would have you know I have not lightly squandered away my money; I'm poor myself, and know its value; fifty dollars did I give to poor old Victor to buy his only son off from the militia; and ten dollars went to poor Lena, whose cow died last week; so I have only forty left. I did intend—but 'tis all over now; Here, take what I can give, and try if you can find out some good soul that will for charity make up the remainder.

GRIMES (*pushing the money away*).

Nay, let it go after the rest! half help is no help. I beg your pardon, sir, that I have troubled you in vain.

RUDOLPH.

Grimes, you do not think that I deceive you? Ask Victor—ask old Lena.

GRIMES.

What right have I to call you to account, sir? You have done what you pleased with your own. Perhaps some of these days you'll hear talk of a poor drowned body pulled out of the river; such things, sir, happen every day. Who minds 'em?

RUDOLPH (*sternly*).

Grimes, I am sorry I must say it——

GRIMES.

What, sir?

RUDOLPH.

You're a bad man—a heartless, worthless fellow!

GRIMES (*recoiling*).

If I do it, it is because I'm driven to it.

RUDOLPH.

You will do no such thing. When men do harbour in their brain—

Driven wild by misery—such deadly projects, They do not prate of them. You'd frighten me

Because you do believe I have the money,
And yet refuse it, and you think that fear
Will grant what pity has denied.

You see I know you, fellow, and I know
You will go hence, and boast your cunning—
laugh

At my too easy nature ; but it matters not :
You are most miserable, and the more—not less
so —

As you are more unworthy. Then your wife
And helpless children. (*Opens a drawer.*) Here,
take this diamond ring, this watch—all my poor father left me ; any one will lend you sixty dollars on them until I can redeem them—as I will.

[*Marie, who has been gradually stealing from behind the screen during the last speech, makes a sign to Lisette, who goes out through the door in the back ground, and then steps forward, and stops Rudolph's hand.*

MARIE.

Grimes is this good man's name ?

RUDOLPH.

You here, madam ?

MARIE.

Is your name Grimes ?

GRIMES.

Jacob Grimes, an' please you.

MARIE.

Farmer on the estate of old Baron Stiller ?

GRIMES.

The same.

MARIE.

I thought so. (*Hurriedly.*) Then 'tis to you I am commissioned, by one who knows you, to pay you a sum of money.

[*She places a purse in his hands, and turns away quickly ; Rudolph follows her, snatches her hand, and kisses it.*]

MARIE.

O you're a noble creature !

[*She hurries out after Lisette ; Rudolph stands looking after her with delight, Grimes with astonishment.*]

The curtain falls.

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE—*An apartment in the castle.*

Enter the COUNT, and the COUNTESS MARIE, cautiously. The COUNT is in a rich military costume, wearing his orders; the COUNTESS in an elegant undress.

COUNT.

Well, we have stolen in thus far, like thieves in the night! How little does my old friend think that his expected guests are already beneath his roof! O what a superexcellent jest 'twould be to meet old Thürmer in his morning gown and slippers—we thus pranked up! Spite of the bad roads and that confounded postilion, my plan succeeds—we shall take them by sur-

prise; and bows and speeches at the carriage door dispensed with. But, Marie, you are silent—what! not a word?

MARIE (*who has been standing as one lost in thought, starts*).

I!—you were speaking, papa?

COUNT.

And now I think on't, for a good half hour you have not oped your lips—and all your sprightliness o' the sudden gone. What! beats the little heart! O it begins feel to uneasy, does it? poor thing—poor thing!

MARIE (*absently*).

Uneasy? why uneasy?

COUNT.

Methinks a first interview with an intended bridegroom——

MARIE.

Ah true! I had forgotten—I was not thinking of him.

COUNT.

No! is it possible? of what, then, were you thinking?

MARIE.

Of something very different—of a scene I witnessed in the farmhouse yonder: that it is, I think, which makes me serious.

COUNT.

O ho!—a scene?—I comprehend! Let me look at your purse.

MARIE (*holds it up playfully*).

'Tis empty.

COUNT.

I thought so—and the twenty ducats?

MARIE.

Gone!

COUNT (*smiling*).

So so! and what will you do without money in a strange house, where you will be expected to leave some more than ordinary token of your liberality?

MARIE.

O papa, there's plenty in your writing-case.

COUNT.

Ha, ha! you think to help yourself from that?

MARIE.

To be sure I do; and when I have told you how and why it was my ducats went——

COUNT.

Not now—not now—I'll hear your tale another time.

MARIE.

O! let me tell you only, that those few moments in the old farmhouse have been a lesson to me

shall last me all my life long. We, father, give to the poor, and largely and willingly we give from our abundance. Yet what is that to the beneficence of those who are themselves most poor, and yet spare out of their very need? That young man, for instance,—he who gave us such a pleasant reception—

COUNT.

The Baron's bailiff?

MARIE.

But is he so indeed? I heard one say, "your honour."

COUNT.

Some one, belike, who wanted money from him!

MARIE.

Do you know his name, papa?

COUNT.

I never asked.

[Marie turns away, and sinks into a reverie.]

Enter EDWARD. (Whenever under the eye of Marie, he affects a most dismal melancholy air.)

EDWARD.

My honoured friend!—Ah, the Countess too—I heard but now of your arrival.

MARIE (*starting*).

Ah! Baron Rudolph—you here!

EDWARD (*with sentiment*).

You deign to know me then! you have not your poor Rudolph quite forgotten?

MARIE.

On the contrary, I'm charmed to find you here! 'tis so pleasant in a strange house to see the face of an old friend!

EDWARD.

Not always—not under all circumstances, I fear!—

COUNT (*aside*).

Now what the devil sent this puppy here? 'Morning, young gentleman!

EDWARD.

Dear Count, to find myself again between you and your charming daughter, recalls the happiest, brightest days of my sad life. (*Sighs.*) Do you remember, Countess, our delightful boatings on the Moldau—our excursions to Bubenz—and our long walks in the valley of Czarka?*

MARIE.

O perfectly—they stand noted in my pocket-book.

COUNT (*aside*).

I wish he were at the bottom of the sea!

* Places in the vicinity of Prague.

EDWARD.

And do you remember the day when we passed the churchyard outside the Oynster gate, and saw that poor youth laid in the ground, whom slighted love——

MARIE.

Yes—poor foolish youth! my heart was sorry for him.

EDWARD.

Foolish do you call him?

MARIE.

Why, is it not a folly when a man,
Born to high duties and high destinies,
Even as he is a *man*—becomes the sport
And victim of mere passion? (*pauses thoughtfully.*)
Men are in that far happier——

EDWARD.

In that—in what?

MARIE.

They can in some sort choose their own destiny.

EDWARD (*sighing ostentatiously*).

Not always, Countess.

MARIE.

Yes—not only choose their lot in life, but *who* shall share that lot.

EDWARD.

But if the possession of that one fair object——

that realisation of our youth's ideal, be denied to us!

MARIE.

Why then you have freedom left. Freedom of action, will,—and the whole world before you—the power still to save, to serve—to be and to make happy; but a poor woman has no resource—marriage is forced upon her, as a necessity, be it her will or not—

Too happy if the man, to whom her fate,
And not her own deliberate choice, has given
her,

Be not quite worthless.

COUNT.

Why, Marie—why, girl, I never heard you speak in such fine sentences!

EDWARD.

The Countess seems indeed more serious than her wont.

MARIE (*sportively*).

Is it not a woman's privilege, and the moon's,
To change from hour to hour!

EDWARD.

Have you seen my kinsman?

MARIE (*with a checked feeling of disgust*).

No—not yet.

EDWARD.

He is not then returned from hunting ; we expected you later.

MARIE.

There is no hurry—none.

EDWARD.

His return can hardly be indifferent to you, Countess?

MARIE (*petulantly*).

In what does that concern you?

COUNT.

Nay, Marie, be not so ungracious—you snap the young man up after a fashion—

EDWARD.

If he but knew how her ill-humour charms me! (*aside*.)

(*Aloud and distantly*.) I recognise the Countess

And that discretion, that severity

With which she knew full well to check my boldness

In former times, when I presumed too far.

And since in this I find her still unchanged,

May I not hope that *all* remains the same?

COUNT (*sarcastically*).

As far as I am concerned, my opinion of you remains the same—if that be any comfort. (*Aside*.)
coxcomb!

EDWARD.

You are silent, Countess?

MARIE.

I am not fond of professions, as you well know; but none, believe me, can wish you better.

The BARON is heard outside.

BARON.

Here already! in the house! and I not know a word of it!

COUNT.

By my faith I should know that voice!

Enter the BARON.

COUNT (*running up to him with open arms*).

Wilhelm! do you not know me?

BARON.

Leistenfeld!

COUNT.

Come to my arms, old friend! (*They embrace.*)
How long is it, Wilhelm, since we last saw each other?

BARON.

Some eighteen years, or more.

COUNT.

Ay, time flies! What do you say to us for coming upon you thus unawares? We left Thal-

berg before dawn this morning, just to take you by surprise.

BARON.

And therefore 'tis you find us unprepared—nothing as I could wish it.

COUNT.

But as I wished it, my good old friend! If there be anything I detest in the world, 'tis to be received in the house of my dearest friend by a bevy of liveried fellows drawn up in the hall; stiff bows instead of warm embraces—and who knows?—perhaps a speech in Latin, penned by the schoolmaster!

BARON.

Always the same gay buoyant spirit!

COUNT.

And you too, (*looking at him*)—nay, I can scarce return the compliment. Fie, Thürmër, what a wrinkled brow is here!—furrows of care and thought, but not of age;—no, no—you are my junior by three months at least.

BARON.

Ah, Leistenfeld! since we parted, how many things have happened——

COUNT.

What things, man? I heard of no misfortune—on the contrary, they tell me you have grown rich.

BARON.

Speak not of it—riches are oft a burthen.

COUNT.

Ha, ha! an easy burthen, methinks.

BARON (*seeing Marie, who comes forward*).

Is not this your charming daughter? pray present me.

COUNT.

My daughter—truly is she: if I had not quite forgotten her, though in the present case she is not last nor least to be considered! Marie, my friend the Baron von Thürmer.

BARON.

Fair Countess, a thousand welcomes heartily—(*Kisses her hand*)—might I but be permitted to hope that the humble roof you have deigned to grace with your lovely presence would never lose you more, I were most happy.

MARIE (*withdraws her hand and curtsseys*).

Your lordship honours me! (*Aside.*) The compliment was somewhat overstrained. (*She walks away.*)

COUNT.

But where's your son?

BARON (*looking at Edward*).

My son!

EDWARD (*pulling his father by the sleeve*).

Yes, your son,—my cousin Edward. (*Softly.*)
Hush! hush! you know—all goes on capitally.

BARON (*in a whisper, and angrily*).

Boy, I insist——

EDWARD.

Hush, hush! for heaven's sake! I am in the last act of my drama, close upon the catastrophe; will you spoil all?

COUNT (*approaching*).

What's the matter here?

EDWARD (*taking the Count aside*).

Do not ask, dear Count; my uncle's in a rage against his son for not being here in time.

COUNT.

Indeed, I'm sorry! (*To the Baron.*) Your son, it seems, is fond of hunting.

BARON (*perplexed*).

My son?

COUNT.

Tush, my good friend! young men will have their pastimes: had he known of our intent to be here early, he had not gone a hunting, I'll be sworn.

BARON.

My son, you say, is out hunting?

COUNT.

Why, know you not he is?

BARON.

No—O yes! surely. (*Aside.*) A pretty figure do I cut here!

Enter RUDOLPH (hastily).

RUDOLPH.

Father, they tell me your guests——

COUNT.

Father!

EDWARD (*aside*).

Ha! excellent! I have my cue! (*Aloud.*) Ay, there he stands—the long-expected!

BARON (*staring*).

Who?

EDWARD.

My cousin.

MARIE.

Is it possible!—this gentleman?

COUNT.

What! our host of the farm?

MARIE (*aside, drawing breath as if relieved*).

Yes—I'd marry *him*!

BARON (*aside*).

This is too absurd!

RUDOLPH.

Ha! whom do I see?

EDWARD.

The Count and Countess Leistenfeld.

BARON (*whispers Rudolph*).

Do you know them?

RUDOLPH.

Certainly—they were at the farm this morning.

EDWARD (*with an heroic air*).

Allow me, cousin! this—this is your envied place! (*Presenting Rudolph to the Countess; he approaches her timidly*).

EDWARD (*drawing his father aside*).

Do you not mark her emotion, her evident alarm?—delicious!

BARON (*aside*).

You're a fool!

RUDOLPH.

I am but too happy to see you again!—you too, my lord! (*bowing to the Count*).

MARIE.

Really I did not expect to find in our polite host—the surprise——

RUDOLPH.

Is not, I hope, disagreeable?

MARIE.

Why should you think so?

COUNT.

Ha, you rogue! you knew full well who were your guests this morning!

RUDOLPH.

Nay, how should I have guessed it?

COUNT.

If not, so much the better, our acquaintance has begun without disguise or ceremony. Your hand, my boy!

RUDOLPH (*warmly*).

I hope—I hope you mean to stay among us?

COUNT.

Ah! you hope it, do you? so do I, faith! why you have grown up a fine tall youth since I saw you! Do you remember, Wilhelm? (*To the Baron, who has been conversing aside with Edward.*) You, I suppose, (*turning to Rudolph,*) have forgotten all about it?

RUDOLPH.

Was I not a child then?

COUNT.

Yes, truly, a mere brat; but, Wilhelm, 'tis the same look—O I'd know him anywhere! but come, my dear Baron, let us see your house.

BARON.

Your apartment, I fear, is not quite ready.

COUNT.

Then show me yours. I make it a point never to go into my room till after my Marie has been there, and has seen that everything is arranged according to my fancies—so take me with you. I'll see your gallery and your drawing-room, and

your dining-room—your stables—your kitchen—damme! I'll see all, from the garret to the cellar! This young gentleman (*taking hold of Edward*) shall go along with us; the other (*pointing to Rudolph*) shall keep my daughter company till we return.

BARON.

But, my dear Count, I think——

COUNT.

Think, man! nonsense! don' you see there are three too many in the room?—come, come!

EDWARD (*turning back, runs up hurriedly to Rudolph*).

My dear cousin, one word! the Countess thinks, and the Count too, that you—I mean that I—I confess——

COUNT (*seizing him by the arm*).

Pooh! pooh! young man, you must take some other time to talk to your cousin; for the present (*winking*) he's otherwise engaged—off with you—(*Pushing him out.*)

EDWARD.

Now, then, let fate decide it!

[*Exeunt, the Count urging them off.*]

RUDOLPH—MARIE.

RUDOLPH (*looking after Edward with amazement*).

What could he possibly mean?

MARIE (*aside, observing him*).

O no, I'll not believe it—he has no share in the perfidy of his father! I would this moment tell him all—all—but I so fear to grieve him.

RUDOLPH.

You heard your father? he has left me here to keep you company—to me what a delightful task!—if only——I do not tire you—

MARIE.

No fear of that; your unpretending, sensible conversation I should prefer to all the commonplace wit of our townbred coxcombs.

RUDOLPH.

Indeed? I cannot doubt you,—yet I fear me
You only say so out of your good nature.
Since you endure my presence—too happy am I—
Methinks 'tis strange, that being so shy, so
bashful,
When I would speak to a lady, never knowing
How to begin—O I could talk with you
The whole day long!

MARIE.

Indeed? I'm glad of that.

RUDOLPH.

I do believe

There is no thought, no feeling of my heart,
I would not tell you—freely as to heaven.

MARIE (*smiling*).

What, then you think there is some goodness in me?

RUDOLPH (*passionately*).

You are all goodness—as you are all beauty!

MARIE (*shrinking back in confusion*).

Surely—a goddess of three hours' acquaintance!
—O you do not know me yet—

RUDOLPH.

Do I not?

‘When I am walking in our woods, and chance
To pick up a stray leaf—a tiny leaf,
I have but to look upon its shape and hue,
And delicate vein'd texture—straight I name
you

The parent tree, from which the breeze hath swept
it——

Its form, its nature, and its uses :— thus
From the least action, springing from the heart,
I'll tell you what that heart is.”

MARIE.

You are a nice observer.

RUDOLPH.

And when I heard you speak so kindly
To that poor Grimes—your sweet eyes filled
With gathering tears——

MARIE.

No more—O shame me not !

To give a little from our superfluity
What is it but to prove—we are not monsters?
But you—who would have sacrificed——

[She stops suddenly ; a pause.]

You seem, for one bearing your rank and name,
But poorly provided with the means
Either to give or spend?

RUDOLPH.

I am content.

MARIE.

Yet you love giving?

RUDOLPH.

Why, I cannot hoard.

MARIE.

And yet—I'd wager that you run not into
debt?

RUDOLPH.

No, never—when I do give,
'Tis what I honestly can call my own.

MARIE.

How is it you reside not here in the castle?

RUDOLPH.

I have my apartment here, but, to confess the
truth, I find my lodging at the farm yonder
much more convenient for my pursuits.

MARIE.

You are fond of farming?

RUDOLPH.

I understand but little else.

MARIE.

What, have you not studied—been to college?

RUDOLPH.

No—I should have made a sorry student, or a man of business; I could not bear to be confined within brick walls and crowded streets—I must live with nature, and must breathe the free air of her heaven.

MARIE.

You are right! it seems to me, too, that being pent

In narrow streets and houses crushes the heart—

Nay, parches it, as with

A kind of thirst for nature and for freedom.

There is a power in the broad bright glance

Of sky and landscape mingling, which enlarges

As well as cheers and purifies the mind.

RUDOLPH.

You love the country, then?

MARIE.

Love it? O yes, indeed! I should prefer a country life to any other.

RUDOLPH.

You would? for that sweet speech I needs must kiss your hand—may I?

(Taking her hand timidly as she presents it; he kisses it, then holds it for a moment, gazing on it.)

MARIE.

What are you thinking of?

RUDOLPH.

Forgive me—I was looking at your hand.

MARIE.

No harm in that.

RUDOLPH.

And I was thinking, pray pardon me——

MARIE.

What were you thinking?

RUDOLPH.

How happy the possession of that hand
Might make a man !

MARIE.

Perhaps it might—

If a true heart, and some small skill in house-
wifery

Would satisfy him—*

RUDOLPH.

He were a blockhead else! (*Pauses.*) Lady,
may I ask your name?

* In Germany, no rank, however high—unless perhaps the very *highest* of all—exempts a woman from “some small skill in housewifery.” A lady whom I knew, in rank and blood superior even to Marie, and one of the most accomplished and truly elegant women I ever met with, told me she had studied for two years (from fourteen to sixteen) the various arts of housekeeping; making pastry and preparing all things necessary for the sick, &c. I wish it were more generally the fashion in England.

MARIE.

Marie.

RUDOLPH.

Marie ! 'tis a sweet name, a consecrated—
There's faith, and hope, and love, and blessedness,
In those two little syllables, *Marie* !
I had a sister once who bore that name—
But I was going to say—No, no,—I cannot !

MARIE.

What were you going to say ?

RUDOLPH.

What I would say—was—The Count, your
father—he is a great man, is he not ?

MARIE.

He is no more than any other nobleman.

RUDOLPH.

But is he not very rich ?

MARIE (*smiling*).

Is it a crime to be rich ?

RUDOLPH.

O no—on the contrary, I am glad of it, for
his sake—but yet—(*Aside.*) O this will never do,
I am a fool—(*Pauses.*) May I ask how old you
are ?

MARIE (*smiling*).

That, sir, is a question which no gentleman must
ask a lady, be she old or young.

RUDOLPH.

Ah, true, true—I had forgot. I beg your pardon !

MARIE.

'Tis granted.

RUDOLPH.

In truth, I asked

Not caring much to know how old you are,
But if you had answered, seventeen or eighteen,
I might, again, have ventured the remark—

[*Pauses, embarrasse d.*

That it was time to think—to——

Did you not tell me, lady, you had a suitor?

MARIE.

Yes.

RUDOLPH.

May I ask if it be my cousin?

MARIE.

Your cousin? no indeed.

RUDOLPH.

No? he told me of a fair acquaintance he had
made in Prague, and then I thought, perhaps—

MARIE.

'Tis true, I knew your cousin when he was
there: but for any thought of marriage—you
may believe me, there's nothing in't.

RUDOLPH.

Thank heaven for that! (*Aside.*) And yet
What can it be to me? What hope have I?

MARIE.

What were you saying?

RUDOLPH,

This suitor, of whom you spoke,—
He would not dare aspire to your hand,
Unless he were an all-accomplished gentleman,
And worthy of you ?

MARIE (*aside*).

What would he say ?

RUDOLPH.

You told me once, with such a sweet, sweet
voice,
You did not care for those gay cavaliers ;
Did you not say so ?

MARIE.

I did ;—what then ?

RUDOLPH (*half aside*).

O if I dared to speak—but no—O no !
It were too much presumption.

Enter the COUNT hastily.

COUNT.

Marie—forgive the intrusion ; but here's the
carriage come, and half-a-dozen men pulling the
things about ; I'm sorry, but, you know, unless
you see to my affairs yourself, nothing is ever
right, or as I wish it—pr'ythee go.

MARIE.

This moment, dear papa. (*Aside to the Count.*)
And truly the gentleman there was beginning to
be *quite* incomprehensible.

COUNT (*as she is going detains her and whispers*).

Marie! tell me—how do you like him?

MARIE (*in a low voice*).

Papa—I'll have him!

[*Exit.*]

THE COUNT—RUDOLPH.

COUNT.

So now, young gentleman, let me hear what you have to say, and speak to the point at once!

RUDOLPH.

I, my lord? most willingly—what is your pleasure?

COUNT.

Come, come—how do you like my daughter?

RUDOLPH.

Your daughter?

COUNT.

Yes, to be sure—she pleases you, eh? I thought so.

RUDOLPH.

My Lord Count—I —

COUNT.

Come, answer plainly as a man of metal—you like her?

RUDOLPH.

You have then discovered?—O I am indeed a poor dissembler—yet be not angry!

COUNT.

Angry?

RUDOLPH.

On mine honour as a man,
I could not help it; and the heart, you know,
Will not be ruled.

COUNT (*gravely*).

Do you mean to tell me that your heart is engaged elsewhere?

RUDOLPH.

Elsewhere?—O no! and the more wretched I
—I would it were!

COUNT.

Or perhaps my daughter does not fulfil the expectations you had formed of your future wife?

RUDOLPH.

Count! do you mock me?

Pardon me, but it is not well, my lord!

What have I done, that you should scorn me
thus?

I am a man of honour, and in blood your daughter's equal.

COUNT.

Young sir! have you lost your senses? or have I? Speak, does my daughter please you?

RUDOLPH.

O heaven and earth !

COUNT.

Nay, with interjections we shall ne'er get on.
Does she please you, or does she not ?

RUDOLPH.

Well, since you needs must have it—I love her
to distraction !

COUNT.

And pray why did you not say so at once ?

RUDOLPH.

To what end should I say so ?

COUNT.

To what end ? Is't not your wish to marry
her ?

RUDOLPH.

To marry her ?—your daughter ? Count !
Should I dare make such a mad proposal, what
would you think of me ?

COUNT.

As of an honest fellow, whom I esteem and
love, and thereupon give you my blessing.

RUDOLPH.

Count, take care, and say it not again, lest I
do take you at your word !

COUNT.

Why, do so—I desire nothing better.

RUDOLPH.

Surely, surely, you cannot be in earnest ?

COUNT.

By heaven I am ! and in most serious earnest ;
Nor can I understand what you do find
Surprising or incredible in the assurance.

RUDOLPH.

My *father*, then ?

COUNT.

And *son*, with all my heart !

RUDOLPH.

Away, then, with all respects—I can hold no
longer ! O I must hug you !

*[Seizes him in his arms, and embraces him
closely.]*

COUNT.

O mercy ! mercy ! squeeze me not to death !

RUDOLPH.

O pardon me !—the joy—the exceeding joy—
Is it indeed no dream ?

COUNT.

Compose yourself.

RUDOLPH.

Had Heaven in store such blessedness for me—
Me, a plain country fellow ? Ah, I do fear me
Your noble friends will scarce approve your
choice.

Will they not look down on my rustic breeding ?

COUNT.

He is no more my friend,
Who could look down on such a heart as yours !

RUDOLPH.

And then my slender income——

COUNT (*laughing*).

Ay, I can well believe
Old dad has kept you somewhat tight ; but what
then ?

In honour of our wedding he'll come down,
And handsomely—he must and shall.

RUDOLPH.

O no, no ! he must not—shall not ! I will not
hear of it ; he has already done so much for me.

COUNT.

Well, well, we'll not dispute about it ; my
daughter is rich enough to afford to marry even
a poor man ; and I'd give her to you, were you as
poor as Job. Let that content you, my dear
scrupulous friend. So, in one word, I am to
understand that, formally, and at once, you ask
my daughter's hand ?

RUDOLPH.

Once, twice, a thousand times over, as my best
good ! as I would ask of Heaven its chiefest
blessing ! (*Pause.*) And yet, you spoke of for-
tune. Now I remember me, your daughter's

rich—an heiress, as I have heard ; you do not think ?——

COUNT (*laughing*).

No, no, not I !

RUDOLPH.

When first I loved your daughter, I knew not she was rich.

COUNT.

Content you, my dear fellow !
Such an outburst of honest joy did never
From selfish interest spring ; so now farewell !
I go to speak to my daughter, and to hear
What she will say.

RUDOLPH.

What think you will she say ?

COUNT.

She will say—yes !

RUDOLPH.

I think so too—my heart does whisper it.
Go, then, my *father* ! and O soon
Let me hear from you !

COUNT.

Adieu, despairing shepherd !

[*As Rudolph is about to embrace him, he
draws back.*]

No, thank you ! no more hugging !

[*Exit.*]

RUDOLPH (*alone*).

O day of joy and wonder ! who will assure me
That I shall not wake up from this blest vision
To find it *air* !—but no,—’tis true—’tis real—
I do not dream. Poor Rudolph Thürmer
Has won a bride. O heaven,—and what a bride !
The loveliest, sweetest, best in all the world !

(*Pauses.*) I saw it in her eyes, and in her smile,
And in the gradual dawn of that sweet blush,
That came and went—O she will not say *no* !

(*Pauses.*) I’ll have the banns asked in our vil-
lage church

’Mong those who have loved me well ;
Then on the third Sunday, when I hear toge-
ther

The names of Rudolph Thürmer—Marie Leis-
tenfeld—

O then—if the mounting joy, that even now
Swells my heart full to bursting——

[*Presses his hands to his heart.*

EDWARD (*at the door*).

Are you quite alone ?

RUDOLPH (*springing towards him*).

Alone ! no, coz ! but compassed round with
spirits of joy. O Edward, you are come in happy

time—I wanted some one with whom to share the rapture !

EDWARD.

Rapture !

RUDOLPH.

Edward, would you think it ? I am a chosen bridegroom.

EDWARD.

A bridegroom ?

RUDOLPH.

Ay, be amazed as I am—but 'tis true.
Count Leistenfeld grants me his daughter's
hand.

EDWARD.

Heaven and earth !

RUDOLPH.

Ay, is it not strange—incredible ? To say the truth, I never should have had courage to ask it, but the old gentleman—good excellent man !—met me more than half way.

EDWARD.

O my cursed folly ! Rudolph, will you ever forgive me ? 'tis all my doing !

RUDOLPH.

Yours ? you've done a good action then—Heaven bless you for it ! O I am the happiest man in the world !

EDWARD.

Not so—not so—poor fellow! how shall I tell it you? But, Rudolph, you have rejoiced too soon.

RUDOLPH.

How so, coz?

EDWARD.

'Tis all a mistake!

RUDOLPH.

Make me 'not such a wretch!

EDWARD.

Call it caprice — folly — vanity — what you will—I have the Count and Countess both deceived. Both take you for my father's son — me for his nephew. Rudolph! O had they not arrived before th' appointed time, I had told you all!

RUDOLPH.

And how, in heaven's name, came that wild thought in your head?

EDWARD.

I wished to try the tenderness of Marie: by heaven, I had no other purpose!—had I foreseen——

RUDOLPH (*turning away*).

I thought so! 'twas too much—all—all is vanished!

EDWARD.

Rudolph—dear cousin—grieve not thus——

RUDOLPH.

Ay, that is easily said! Marie your bride? Go—you have acted basely—cruelly!

EDWARD.

Not knowingly, believe it!

RUDOLPH.

What signifies it? in the consequence 'tis still the same.

EDWARD.

True—O I could beat myself!

RUDOLPH.

You have cause: in what a position have you placed me?—a position at once false and ridiculous.

EDWARD.

It shall be explained instantly, and then, you know, the blame will rest on me.

RUDOLPH.

The blame! ay, cousin—the blame on you, on *me* the pain—the ridicule; but you are a rich man, cousin, and a happy. Did it never occur to you that one like me might buy the joy, the hope of the last half hour, with the misery of a whole life?

EDWARD.

Nonsense, cousin; never take things in this

serious sentimental fashion ; 'tis but a joke, man, and for the rest, I know what my father's intentions are. Rudolph, you will be a rich man, sooner than you think for't ; and then, you know, you can choose a wife for yourself.

RUDOLPH (*with disgust*).

What talk you of a wife ? If I cannot have Marie, I will die a bachelor for her sake.

EDWARD.

Die ! pooh ! for a woman who does not love you ?

RUDOLPH.

How do you know that ?

EDWARD.

Because she loves *me*.

RUDOLPH.

You ! she'll marry you, perhaps, because she must ; but love !—pshaw !

EDWARD.

Why, cousin Rudolph, I knew her in Prague, I tell you !

RUDOLPH.

So she told me.

EDWARD.

And danced with her.

RUDOLPH.

Well—what then ?

EDWARD.

Rudolph, you make me angry.

RUDOLPH.

'Twas not my intention.

EDWARD.

I will this day explain all !

RUDOLPH.

Do so, I pray you.

EDWARD.

And then you'll see, cousin——

RUDOLPH.

Ay, and *you'll* see, cousin ; we all shall see. When do you intend to speak to the Count ?

EDWARD.

'Tis now dinner-time ; the moment we rise from table.

RUDOLPH.

And must I appear once more under your name ? Edward, I warn you—it may be dangerous.

EDWARD.

Thanks for your warning—I'll risk the danger.

RUDOLPH.

Her father has even now made my proposal known to her.

EDWARD.

Well—I should like to see how she receives it.

RUDOLPH.

And I tell you fairly, that though you oblige me in honour to appear once more under your name, I will *not* play false to mine own heart for your advantage. I can assume no coldness where I feel none.

EDWARD.

Do as you list.

RUDOLPH.

—On the contrary, there is danger that I do my best to please ; I feel I could not help it.

EDWARD.

You have my leave.

RUDOLPH.

To win her heart?

EDWARD (*ironically*).

To be sure, coz !

RUDOLPH.

You give me, then, *carte blanche* ?

EDWARD.

Yes, yes.

RUDOLPH.

And if she give you the willow to wear ?

EDWARD.

Why, then I'll be your bridesman.

RUDOLPH.

Your hand on't!—that's all I wished to know,
and now my conscience is at ease.

(Exit, Edward follows him laughing.)

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—*The apartment of the Countess.*

Enter the BARON, followed by EDWARD.

EDWARD.

You here, father, in the Countess's room?

BARON.

I am here to speak to the Countess, to retrieve your folly, discover all—and beg of her, indulgence!

EDWARD.

And I am here for the same purpose—pray leave it to me.

BARON.

I have left too much to you. When I think upon the scene this morning, when I was led,

through shame and fear together, to countenance that foolish farce of yours, I am well-nigh mad. At dinner just now, I could not touch a morsel.

EDWARD.

This evening shall make amends for all: we'll all be happy—all but that poor fellow, Rudolph. On mine honour I could be sorry for him—though he has angered me, and wounded my self-love past all endurance.

BARON.

The youngster has had the audacity to make proposals to the Countess!

EDWARD.

Which the Countess has declined.

BARON.

Declined, do you say? she has asked time to consider—the young lady's phrase on these occasions.

EDWARD.

Did you observe her, as she sat at table, with such a shade of sadness and disquiet upon her lovely brow?

BARON.

Absent, indeed, she seemed, and thoughtful—but nothing more.

EDWARD.

Did you not mark how oft her eye rested on

me, with such a look, so tenderly significant? and then it wandered to my cousin, with a glance, which said as plainly, "You my husband?—no indeed!"

BARON.

It said all that?—you have a knack at interpreting looks with a vengeance!

EDWARD.

As we left the table, she spoke to him. I could only hear the words, "In an hour:" then he bowed low, and answered, "In an hour." You will see she has made the appointment, just to give him his dismissal; and yet—no—it must not come to that—such a humiliation my poor cousin must not endure for me!

BARON.

Poor cousin—and always *poor*! I pray you waste not your compassion till you see cause:—as for this *humiliation* you speak of, it is as likely to be yours as his, unless you bring this foolish farce to an end, and quickly. Girls take strange fancies in their heads sometimes.

EDWARD.

Ay—but for a girl of her rank and education to take a fancy to our country cousin, were something quite too strange, upon mine honour. She has eyes—some sense too—and can make comparisons—and though I say it—

BARON.

No doubt—but in a young girl's head, sometimes, love plays the devil both with sense and eyes. Therefore I will not trust her—she shall know all, and instantly. (*Going to the door of the inner room.*)

EDWARD.

She shall—in a few moments, if you will only leave the field to me!

BARON.

I fear to trust you.

EDWARD.

Nay, you'll allow, to unravel the tangled plot of our romance is rather more suitable to a young gallant than an old sage papa. She comes! leave me alone with her, I beg.

BARON.

Well, then, I leave you. Succeed, if you can, with the young lady: meanwhile I'll go to her father, tell him the truth, and bring him round, if possible. [*Exit.*]

EDWARD.

I swear papa had well-nigh made me feel a little odd—but—ahem! *Courage, mon ami!* were I to suffer my country cousin to bear off the prize, I never more could show my face among my friends in town. She comes, quite in the *penserosa*

style. Now for a love-lorn look—a sigh—and so forth. (*He walks aside.*)

Enter MARIE from the inner room, slowly, as if lost in thought.

MARIE.

In an hour I told him to be here—why did I not say on the instant?—

Alas! I felt the weakness of my heart,
And wished for time to gather up my strength.
And now each moment
I feel I grow more anxious and more fearful.

(*Pauses.*)

Howe'er it end, this interview before me
Must needs be fraught with pain.
If Edward be the man I think to find him,
How will his father's perfidy wound his heart?
If he be not—O no—I do not doubt him—
I only fear—O coward that I am—
The pain I must inflict. (*Pauses.*)
I will speak truth, though I do die for it!
Truth will I have, though it destroy me utterly!
But this suspense—'tis dreadful—

EDWARD (*who has been approaching during the last words*).

(*Aside.*) She will speak the truth, will she?
bravo!—now is my cue. (*Aloud.*) Countess!

MARIE (*aside*).

He here ? provoking ! (*Aloud.*) Your pleasure, Baron Rudolph ?

EDWARD.

I ventured hither to offer my congratulations on your approaching marriage.

MARIE.

Pray spare them, till I know a cause why you should offer them, or I accept them !

EDWARD.

Nay, lady, it is already known through all the house that my thrice happy kinsman——

MARIE.

Excuse me—your kinsman is my suitor, it is true ; but for a marriage, there must be two wills consenting.

EDWARD (*joyfully*).

It is not yet decided ?

MARIE (*sighing*).

Not yet.

EDWARD.

That was sadly spoken, Countess !

MARIE (*playfully*).

I do believe you have infected me with your trick of sighing.

EDWARD.

It is in vain you would dissemble !

In those fair eyes the gathering tears rebuke

The light laugh on your lips.—
Countess, you are not happy!

MARIE.

And you, sir, not a whit discreet!

EDWARD.

O pardon me!
If, in an hour like this, I cast aside
All idle ceremony—all vain forms——

MARIE.

I pray you do not; for even ceremony
Has its good uses, and forms their seasons.

EDWARD.

Countess! will you not at least allow you do
not love my kinsman?

MARIE.

(*Aside.*) This is too much! (*Aloud.*) In what,
sir, does it concern you?

EDWARD.

Can you ask it? Do you not know
That I have loved you, Marie, even from the
moment

When I first met you? Do not turn away!
Let me, O let me read my bliss in those
Enchanting eyes! (*Kneels.*)

MARIE.

Pray, sir—forbear—at such a time—it is not
fitting, sir.

EDWARD.

Why not? I have been silent, and did not use my privilege of old acquaintanceship against my cousin; but O! now—it surely is permitted me to speak.

MARIE (*politely*).

Permitted! certainly; yet I could wish you had not availed yourself of the permission. (*Aside.*) Such folly—when I have far other things in my mind!

EDWARD.

Are you so changed, that now you scorn the love
Of a poor orphan youth?

MARIE.

That I do not *scorn* such love,
I may this very day give you the proof.

EDWARD.

Marie, do I understand you?

MARIE (*half aside*).

I fancy not.

EDWARD.

You will allow that once that gentle heart inclined towards me?

MARIE.

My heart?—excuse me, I allow no such thing.

EDWARD.

You are resolved, then, to obey your father's wish?

MARIE.

Of course my father's wish is mine. (*Aside.*)
Insufferable !

EDWARD.

And yet, what had you done, if, when at Prague, I had appeared before you with all my kinsman's rights, his name, his fortune ? Marie, how would you feel ?

MARIE.

Pray spare me. Let it be enough, I do not feel, or think, as I did then.

EDWARD.

No ?

MARIE.

No ; the plain truth is best ; and, sir, were you now king of the universe, I could not—pardon me—accept your hand !

EDWARD.

And who has robbed me of your good opinion ?

MARIE.

No one—only I have a better opinion of another.

EDWARD.

Marie !—good heavens ! is it come to this ?

MARIE.

Pardon me ;

It is not my fault that I give you pain ; you have

driven me to it; and, after all, 'tis best and honestest to speak the truth.

EDWARD.

And that other of whom you speak, can it be my cousin?

MARIE.

It is even he, if you will know the truth.

EDWARD.

I shall go mad—distracted!

MARIE.

Pray don't!

EDWARD.

Rivalled! and by a country bumpkin!

O blockhead that I was!

[A knocking at the door.]

Enter BEATRICE.

BEATRICE.

Sir, Count Leistenfeld is calling for your honour; he begs you will come to him immediately—this instant.

EDWARD.

I come—I come! Has anything happened, Beatrice?

BEATRICE.

Not that I know of; he and my lord were locked up together in the library for a good half hour, and then he came out with such a frown on his face!—that's all I know.

EDWARD (*aside*).

So—I understand ; the storm has burst ; but now I'm armed against it. (*Aloud.*) Madam, I have the honour——

[*He bows, she curtseys very low. He goes out.*

MARIE (*aside, looking after him*):

And this is the man that but a few hours since I fancied I might love ?—yet what will not A young girl fancy, ere she has felt the touch Of real earnest passion ! O me ! O me !

BEATRICE (*aside*).

Well, I declare she doesn't look so very happy. (*Aloud.*) If I might be so bold—I beg your ladyship's pardon—but I am an old servant of the family——

MARIE.

Pray speak freely, for though not of the family——

BEATRICE.

Ah, but they say you will be—is it not true ?—you are to be the bride of our young lord ?

MARIE.

And if it were so, would you be sorry for it ?

BEATRICE.

For the matter of that——

MARIE (*smiling*).

This hesitation is not so flattering to me, methinks.

BEATRICE.

O I don't mean that; if I don't look so glad as perhaps I ought to do, 'tis not because I wished another bride. O no! They say you're good—I'm sure you're beautiful. Only, if it had so pleased Heaven, I could have wished a different bridegroom.

MARIE.

A different bridegroom!

BEATRICE.

I beseech your ladyship's pardon, but I would. Young Baron Rudolph—O if your choice had fallen on him!

MARIE.

On him—Rudolph?

BEATRICE.

Why, is he not a pretty young gentleman?

MARIE.

Nay, there's no denying it.

BEATRICE.

And then he has a heart——! O if you knew him!—if you had but taken the trouble to try to know him!

MARIE (*aside*).

This is strange.

BEATRICE.

And then, if he be not so rich as his fine cousin, yet he is not a match to scorn, neither. Baron

Edward's valet has just told me that the old lord has settled all this estate here on him after his death.

MARIE.

Indeed? that's something! (*Aside.*) So then the old man is not quite steeled against his conscience!

BEATRICE.

Though, to be sure, it isn't the half of what Baron Rudolph by right inherited.

MARIE.

Ha! what do you say? What did Rudolph inherit?

BEATRICE.

Nothing — nothing! the word slipped out against my will.

MARIE.

As far as I know, your lord the Baron here Owns not one foot of land that was not duly Adjudged to him by law.

BEATRICE.

True—very true, my lady; and your ladyship may be assured that neither what I nor what some others venture to think of the matter, can alter that decree; but what I think I think—and thoughts are free.

Enter RUDOLPH.

RUDOLPH (*at the door*).

May I come in ?

MARIE (*aside*).

'Tis he ! O my heart ! (*Aloud.*) Good Beatrice, by your leave, with this gentleman I have to speak alone.

BEATRICE.

With *him*, lady ?

MARIE.

With *him* : is it not natural ?

BEATRICE.

Not so very *natural*. Well, I take my leave.

[*She goes : Rudolph conducts her to the door.*]

MARIE.

I lose all courage ! O what a terrible task
Is this I have undertaken ! (*Aside.*)

RUDOLPH.

If I only knew whether Edward has told her all ! Until I am again *myself*, I have no heart to speak. (*Long pause.*)

MARIE.

You have done me the honour, sir, to ask my
hand,

And I am yet a debtor for the answer
Due to your courtesy.

RUDOLPH.

Permit me, before you speak another word—
was my cousin here ?

MARIE.

Rudolph?—yes, he was here.

RUDOLPH.

Rudolph?

MARIE.

Is not that his name? He was here even now, speaking of this and that—trifles, in short.

RUDOLPH (*aside*).

She knows nothing! (*Aloud.*) Trifles, did you say?

MARIE.

Indeed, I scarcely knew what he was saying,—my mind was busied with far other things.

[*Pauses; and then speaks with exceeding softness.* Edward!

It is my father's wish that I accept you,
And my own heart—without a blush I speak it,
Is not to his wish opposed;
And yet there's a condition, and a hard one,
I must impose on you, which unfulfilled,
I never can be yours.

RUDOLPH.

O what condition could make hard the hope—
Only the hope—that I might dare aspire
To such a height of happiness!

MARIE.

Ere I can tell it, I must a tale divulge,
Painful for me to speak—for you to hear.

Edward!—ah, do not hate me!—O believe it,
A harder sacrifice I could not make
To duty, than to grieve you, Edward—
As I must now!

RUDOLPH.

You alarm me! What can it be to move you
thus?

MARIE.

The far greater part of your father's property
was inherited, I believe, from your aunt Sumner,
was it not?

RUDOLPH.

My father's? (*Aside.*) Ah, I forget! (*Aloud.*)
Yes, I believe so.

MARIE.

This estate here, the Walbach property, and a
large sum in money?

RUDOLPH.

So I have heard.

MARIE.

Well, then, I have to tell you that the whole
belongs, of right, to your young kinsman Ru-
dolph; for to his father it was left by will.

RUDOLPH (*carelessly*).

O yes—in the first instance; but there was
a second will, you know.

MARIE.

I know—your father—he—O Edward, that I

must grieve your heart thus! but your father did most basely force that second will from her when she was senseless, doting, and legally irresponsible for her act.

RUDOLPH.

For Heaven's sake, Countess, you did not—would not listen to such falsehoods! O I know—this is old Beatrice's tale, with which she daily plagues me; but I never listen to her.

MARIE (*gravely*).

You do wrong then!

RUDOLPH.

All envy, slander, idle gossip!—he would not do it—could not—*did* not do it.

MARIE.

Hear me with patience;—I possess the proof of what I now disclose.

And I declare to you—with pain declare,
I *must* refuse your hand, unless you promise
To see your cousin Rudolph reinstated
In his just rights—such is my bond.

RUDOLPH.

My—my cousin Rudolph? (*Aside.*) Always I forget! (*Aloud*) Proofs did you say?

MARIE.

Dr. Brenner—one of the witnesses produced by your father to swear to the legality of the will—this Dr. Brenner died last spring, at

Prague: he was our physician, a friend of my father; and he knew I was the intended bride of the son of the Baron von Thürmer. The day before his death he sent for me, then tortured—wretched man!—with vain remorse of conscience; and, not daring to disclose himself to any other, he placed in my hands, in presence of the priest and his physician, the written acknowledgment of his guilt—and that of—of your father, Edward! He made me promise that I would use it for the benefit of the true heir, and see him righted—here it is. (*Takes a paper from her bosom*). The last confession of a sinful man, repenting of his sin!—Read it.

RUDOLPH (*reading*).

No—no—I never could have believed it—never!

MARIE.

O how I grieve for him!

RUDOLPH (*aside*).

And she might thus be mine—and almost a miracle—at least an angel, places this document in my hands—O heaven!

MARIE.

Edward, you tremble!

RUDOLPH.

I am stunned—I cannot think!

MARIE.

Dear friend, collect yourself. Your father will

resign the fortune thus unrighteously awarded :
and all will yet be well.

RUDOLPH (*with anguish*).

Well?—O never more will it be well!

MARIE.

O yes, it will, it shall! my dowry's large—it
will restore the loss.

RUDOLPH (*aside*).

And who will restore to me my faith in mine
own kindred?

MARIE.

And then your cousin—he has a good heart: he
will spare the honour of your father.

RUDOLPH.

Honour spared, lady! is honour then no
more. (*Aside.*) And he could wrong me thus
—me, who have so loved—so honoured him!

MARIE (*wringing her hands*).

O Edward—Edward!

RUDOLPH (*aside—looking at the paper*).

If this should once be known, he is undone—
for ever infamous—and my cousin—O my poor
cousin!

MARIE.

Alas—alas! I can conceive the anguish!

RUDOLPH.

You, lady? ah no—you do not, and you
cannot!

MARIE.

Does then excess of sorrow make you unjust?

RUDOLPH.

Unjust? O no!—And yet I am most miserable!
[*Throws himself into a chair.*]

MARIE.

Miserable!!

RUDOLPH.

Did I say miserable? (*Starting up.*) No, heaven forbid! Out on me for a fool—to let a scrap of paper move me thus!—This same Dr. Brenner, he left no other writing to this purport?

MARIE.

No—none: and in your hands you hold your kinsman's patrimony, and his rights.

RUDOLPH (*crushing the paper in his hand*).

Do I so? 'tis a vile paper—penned by a sick man in a feverish dream—a dotard and a driveller! There's not a word of truth in't—and 'tis fit only to light the fire! [*Throws it in.*]

MARIE.

Ah heaven! what have you done?

RUDOLPH (*laughing wildly*).

Done! I have battled with the evil one—and conquered! [*Rushes out.*]

MARIE—*alone.*

No—I shall never recover it—never! (*A pause.*)

O can it be?—Edward! on whose truth and honour I would have built as on mine own, so to betray me? trifle with a kinsman's rights, a dying sinner's hope? O horrible!

I would have truth, and in what form it meets me! [*Pause.*

Say that filial love, and sense of honour,
Had more share in the deed than avarice?
What—do I seek to palliate it? O shame!—
This—this is worse than all.

—Ay, *there* it lies—in ashes,
The orphan's patrimony—gone for ever—
And with it all my faith in human kind—
My young heart's dream of happiness—my best
of earthly hopes! [*She weeps.*

The COUNT and the BARON—speaking as they enter.

COUNT.

Ay, there she sits—go talk to her, and hear what she will say.

MARIE (*drying up her tears*).

Ah, papa—is it you? and you, Baron! (*coldly.*)
May I ask to what I owe the honour of this visit?

BARON.

My dear young lady, we old folks, as it seems,

are of little use in the world but to repair and pardon the follies of the young ; so be not angry if I come to beg your mercy for a delinquent.

MARIE.

Of whom do you speak ?

BARON.

Of my offending but enamoured son.

MARIE.

If it be so, I must beg that you trouble yourself no farther ; between your son and me, all is over, and my best hope is, never to see him more.

COUNT.

There ! you hear her !

BARON.

All over, do you say ?

MARIE.

I will confess, he had won my good opinion ;—let me be true—I felt I could have loved him : but one little moment showed me, in time, my error—and now he is rather the object of my hate than love !

BARON.

And is it possible that a youthful folly—

MARIE.

Folly—do you call both cruelty and fraud ?
Yet I forget—
O it becomes you well, sir, to excuse
Th' abettor of your crime.

COUNT.

Marie, you speak in riddles.

MARIE.

Which his lordship well understands.

BARON.

I swear I understand no more than he does what you would say.

MARIE.

Yet named your son? what—is it possible he has not boasted of his master-stroke? Have you not seen him? he left me even now—the traitor!

BARON.

My son!

COUNT.

Stay, stay—I see it all; Marie, of which son do you speak?

MARIE.

Which son! has he more than one then? I speak of Edward—he who this morning was presented to me—

COUNT.

Ah! now I comprehend. And pray, my sweet one, what has *this* Edward done, and how offended?

MARIE.

Father—dear father, you shall now know all—all that, in sympathy with your feeling for a

friend, I have hitherto concealed. This man—do you mark?—already he quails before the coming truth—this man, I say, has robbed the dead, and most unrighteously possessed himself of the inheritance of his nephew.

COUNT.

Marie!—what is all this?

BARON (*pale and agitated*).

Countess—you astonish me; such an accusation—without proof—

MARIE.

The incontestable proof of what I say, I held in my hand—the written confession of Dr. Brenner.

BARON.

Great heaven!—the confession—where is it?

MARIE.

I gave it to your son.

BARON.

My son! which son?

MARIE.

The only one I know as such—even now he left me.

BARON.

Ruined! dishonoured! (*he faints*.)

[*The Count runs to support him.*]

COUNT.

Wilhelm!—Marie, sustain him—here, water, water—help! does no one hear?

Enter RUDOLPH hastily.

RUDOLPH.

What's the matter—is it the Countess? O my poor father!

BARON (*recovering, sees Rudolph at his feet*).

You here! (*to Marie*.) Tell me—and truly—was it to him you gave the writing?

MARIE.

Alas! I did so—cheated by that fair show
Of rectitude; would I had not! for he—
You will approve your son and heir, my lord!
He—HE there had the audacity to burn it
Before my eyes!

BARON (*starting up*).

Burn it?

MARIE.

Yes—

If ever since your crime you have slept in peace,
You may do so still, and fear no public shame—
No accusation more!—

Unless Heaven work a miracle, or the grave
Give up its dead,

There is no earthly power can reach you now.

BARON (*throwing himself into Rudolph's arms*.)

O Rudolph!—my preserver!

MARIE.

Rudolph?

COUNT.

His nephew!

MARIE.

His nephew—not his son?

COUNT.

His nephew—why you have been till now in error, you shall know in time.

MARIE.

His nephew!—the same——

BARON.

Ay—the same in whose behalf that writing existed. O Rudolph—can I ever repay you?

MARIE (*folding her hands on her bosom, looks up to heaven*).

Then my heart was not deceived in him!

RUDOLPH.

My dear father, why all this stir about it? I only wish you had never heard of this same cursed paper. Am I not your son? have I not you to thank for any good that's in me? and if once in your life, and long ago, temptation o'er-came you, shall I now suffer that men shall cast it in your teeth?—O never!

MARIE (*aside*).

O true to honour, as is the sun to the dial!

Enter EDWARD.

EDWARD (*at the door*).

May I come in?

BARON.

Ah, my son!

COUNT.

What shall we do with him?

MARIE.

Will you allow me, father? and you, my lord, to be the speaker in this case? [*The Baron bows.*]

COUNT.

Ay, do, Marie, as you think best: let her speak, Wilhelm. Woman like, she has wit and words at will.

EDWARD (*advancing*).

As no one deigns ask after me, I must announce myself.

MARIE.

Sir, since we met,
Strange and important things have fallen out;
Your father (I know now whose son you are)
Had like to have been entangled in a lawsuit,
Involving not his fortune only, but his honour,
Good name, and even his life.

EDWARD.

How?

MARIE.

Believe what I do say—he will confirm it,
But ask no more ; to all the circumstances
You must remain a stranger—*must*, observe——
Only to spare you all uneasiness
Know this—
That through the zeal and love of your good
kinsman,
The ruin of your house, and of your house's honour,
Is averted.

EDWARD.

Rudolph ! nobly done—just like him !

MARIE.

More than a brother has he been to you—
Your father owns in him the claims of a son,
And gives him in his lifetime this estate,
Which in his will he had left him—are you content ?

EDWARD.

I am most glad on't !

MARIE.

For myself,
Methinks you have no cause to be offended
If here I give my hand to him whose hand
(Even by your own contrivance and consent)
Was placed in mine, as my affianced husband,
To whom, as such, I yielded up my heart,

Whom I have since proved worthy—O how
worthy!

My highest reverence, my deepest love—
And he has both!

[She gives her hand to Rudolph.]

RUDOLPH.

Marie! Edward!

EDWARD.

'Tis a good coz!—there, Countess, take him—
you have my leave.

COUNT.

And make him happy, as you have made your
father.

RUDOLPH (*turning to the Baron.*)

My dear father!

BARON.

Ay, in the dearest sense of the word
A father will I be! here, take him, Countess,
Take him from me—my Rudolph—my true son!
A nobler heart there breathes not in the world!

EDWARD (*waving his cap.*)

Joy! my country cousin!

The curtain falls.

THE END.

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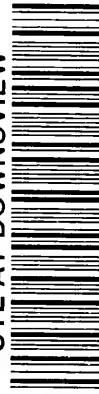


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